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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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SIR EGERTON BRYDGES,

BART.

CHAPTER I.

Autobiography perilous—These memorials not intended to follow a chronological order—Intended objects of present work—Author's birth—His father and mother—Schools and university at which he was educated—His early propensity to poetry—Difference of opinion as to the best poetry—Sensibility—Author's timidity—His conduct at school—Encouraged in poetry by his eldest sister—Milton's Sonnets—Author discouraged by the cold reception of his first poetical publication—Success of "Mary de Clifford"—Author sinks into a genealogist, topographer, and bibliographer—"Arthur Fitzalbini"—Want of self-confidence—Years from 1785 to 1791 gloomy—How the spell was broken—Barony of Chandos—History of Denton mansion and estate—Mr. Robinson—Losses by farming—Dishonesty in accounts of bailiffs and money-agents—Author's aversion to look into accounts.

THERE is no more perilous task than to write memorials of oneself. I will follow no chronological order. I do not offer a regular account

of a life which has been principally spent in a studious seclusion; but merely a register of detached thoughts, sentiments, observations, characters, and events. I claim the privilege of rambling as wildly as Montaigne, and treating unconnected topics just at the moment that they recur to my mind. But I must so far follow the method of autobiographers, as to begin with a few notices of my birth.

I was born 30th November, 1762; the eighth child and second surviving son of a country gentleman. The spot of my nativity was the manor-house of Wootton, between Canterbury and Dover. I derived my baptismal names from my mother's first-cousin, Samuel Egerton, Esq. of Tatton Park, in Cheshire, many years M. P. for that county; who, at his death, in January, 1780, left my mother a legacy of £8000. The first eight and a half years of my life were spent at Wootton, except the autumn of 1767, in my fifth year, when I was carried with my family to Margate for sea-bathing. I have a lively remembrance of the scenery, and many little incidents, and many feelings on that first occasion of separation from my native home.

In July, 1771, I was sent to Maidstone school; and in July, 1775, removed to Canterbury school, where I remained till August, 1780. In October of the same year I went to Queen's College, Cambridge, where I kept my terms till Christ-

mas, 1782; and then removed to the Middle Temple, by which society I was called to the Bar in Michaelmas Term, 1787, at the age of twenty-five.

From eight years old I was passionately fond of reading, and had always a propensity to poetry, at least from the age of fourteen. I do not believe the theory promulgated by Johnson, in his Life of Cowley, that the literary bent a man takes is accidental. I am convinced that it entirely arises from the inborn structure of his mind. I cannot be mistaken in saying that Nature gave me extraordinary sensitiveness of impressions; and that those impressions remained sufficiently long on my mind to enable me to reflect on them, and by degrees make pictures of my own from them, on which it delighted me to dwell. This necessarily led me to love poetry, and to attempt to write it. To write it well is another affair, but as little dependent on accident or art: perhaps it may be partly the result of toil,—of a mind attentive to its own internal movements: but the toil will not avail, if the character of the involuntary movements be not poetical.

As to what is really poetical, both technical critics and the popular taste often differ among themselves; but there can be no just reason for any difference of opinion on the subject. Genuine poetry lies in the thought and sentiment, not in the dress; and these spring from the native

powers of the head and heart, which no study or artifice can give. Memory, artifice, and industry, may assist an author in making imitations, but they will want raciness and life.

Lord Byron has made a great outcry against pretensions to sensibility; but no one had more intense sensibility than he had; and this outcry was itself an affectation. It is fear to go alone, and frankly to lay open one's own internal movements, which diverts genius from its course, and makes it produce spurious fruit. But I cannot think that any one can so deceive himself as to believe, when he is writing from the memory, that he is writing from the heart.

My sensitiveness from childhood was the source of the most morbid sufferings, as well as of the most intense pleasures. It unfitted me for concourse with other boys, and took away all self-possession in society. It also produced ebbs and flows in my spirits, and made me capricious and humorsome; and the opinions formed of me were most opposite; some thinking well of my faculties, others deeming me little above an idiot. I was so timid on entering into school, and my spirits were so broken by separation from home, and the rudeness of my companions, that in my first schoolboy years I never enjoyed a moment of ease or cheerfulness. But I was perfect in my lessons, and never was punished during the nine years of my pupilage, for I got into no mischief or

scrapes; and at Canterbury was, next to C. Abbott, (afterwards Lord Tenterden,) the head of my form. Our senior master, Dr. Osmund Beauvoir, was an excellent classical scholar, of fine taste, and some genius. Many of these feelings, which I should now consider as necessarily associated to a poetical temperament, I then painfully concealed, lest they should subject me to ridicule: but I always entertained the resolution and the hope, some day, to break into notice.

My eldest sister was fourteen years and a half older than me: she had an exquisite taste for poetry, and could almost repeat the chief English poets by heart, especially Milton, Pope, Collins, Gray, and the poetical passages of Shakspeare; and she composed easy verses herself with great facility. It is probable that her conversation and example contributed greatly to my early bent to poetry. Two versifications from Isaiah and Jeremiah, which I wrote for school-tasks at Christmas, 1777, my age fifteen, and which gained great applause, fixed my ambition to write verses for life.

On my arrival at Cambridge, October, 1780, I gave myself up to English poetry. I had, in studying Milton's noble Sonnets,—noble in defiance of Johnson,—convinced myself of the force and majesty of plain language; and I resolved never to be seduced into a departure from it. The consequence was, that my first poems were coldly

received, though praised in "Maty's Review" of May, 1785. I would not change my system; but this coldness chilled and blighted me for some years; and from 1785 to 1791 I wrote no more poetry. Then I poured out my unpremeditated strains rather copiously in my little novel of "Mary de Clifford," published anonymously in January, 1792, at the age of twenty-nine, which immediately obtained some popularity, and is not yet, after forty-one years, entirely forgotten. It was written with a fervid rapidity, which no one seems to believe;—begun in October, 1791, and the sheets sent to the press by the post as fast as they were scribbled. It found its way without name, advertisements, or the smallest interference on my part; and after a few months, the publisher soliciting to buy the copyright of me, I sold it him for a mere trifle, happy to release myself from the expense of the printing and paper, but not getting enough to pay the cost of the two etchings executed by Morris, a pupil of Woollet.

This success did not induce me to consider myself a popular writer: I always was damped in all my efforts by an opposite feeling; and for some years sunk into a genealogist, topographer, and bibliographer. These were unworthy pursuits, in which I wasted much of my precious time: they overlaid the fire of my bosom, but did not extinguish it: they suppressed in me that self-con-

fidence, without which nothing great can be done, and bound my enthusiastic spirit in chains. The fire smouldered within, and made me discontented and unhappy. I saw people, whom I considered (as Sneyd Davies says) "boobies, mounting over my head;" and I felt the incumbrance upon me with scorn, yet could not break it. Perhaps I was more depressed than I ought to have been, and thought more humbly of the estimate the public had made of me than was correct; for my next novel, "Arthur Fitzalbini," 1798, was so successful, that the edition (a small one) was sold in a month. Still I wrote in despair, and felt no cheering expectation that I could please the generality of readers, and that I could spread my name among the successful votaries of literature. I had great ambition, but I will not admit that I had vanity. I repeat my belief, that if I had had more self-confidence, I should have succeeded better. If I say that I had as good pretensions to success as many who were received into favour with the public, I shall be reproached with arrogance and self-delusion. The truth is, that I did not win the name of poet except among a very few; and very many considered me a mere amateur, who had the will without the power. If I felt the power within myself, it was pusillanimous in me to be checked by this injustice. As my taste could not be altered, and as my critical opinions were not taken up lightly, I ought to have

pushed my way right onward undismayed: the public, like women,

> born to be controll'd,
> Stoops to the forward and the bold.

The effect of the attack on Byron by the "Edinburgh Review" was to draw forth his strength and make him blaze. The effect of an unfavourable opinion on the part of the public may hurt a sale, but it will not finally destroy merited fame.

The evil is this, that authors cannot long continue to put forth what will not find a vent; and therefore lose their industry and practice; and no man, without trial, knows what he can do by persevering effort.

> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

I think that I might have done manifold what I have done, if I had not timidly yielded to discouragement. But spirits a thousand-fold higher than mine, such as that of Collins, have been broken by failure of cheers; and the immortal Chatterton drank up the bowl of worldly forgetfulness, that his fiery disappointment might find rest in the grave. What a light among us was *there* extinguished and lost! It was a guilty impatience! I have suffered a hundred times more disappointments, and crosses, and insults, and wrongs, and deprivations, than Chatterton; yet my spirit, though

bent and sunk, was never broken: I am calm and defiant, though not hopeful, in proportion as the storm presses me;—and what trials have I not undergone! I do not mean to relate all these trials; it would involve the conduct of obscure individuals, many of whom are still living. Yet, perhaps, in the course of these Memoirs I may say something of some of them. It is a great doubt with me how far it is proper to discuss private affairs in appeals to the public.

Altogether, the years from 1785 to 1791 were not amongst the most dangerous, but amongst the most wearisome and low-spirited of my life, and those on which I look back with the most regret; —in which my pride was most mortified, and my self-complacence most disturbed. The years from twenty-two to twenty-nine ought to have been the most vigorous period of life: with me it was a fall of faculties which I cannot contemplate without deep debasement. I remember how I pored over "Dugdale's Baronage" during that time, and transcribed pedigrees from the British Museum! The consequence was, that I sunk in the estimation of the few who knew me into the character of a mere compiler. I suspect that I did so even in my own estimation. I can scarcely account for the spell that broke through this superincumbence. It was a mist that broke it too!—a walk of an October morning through the thickest grey vapours I ever encountered. Then it was that

the outline of the tale of "Mary de Clifford" darted upon me; and I went home and wrote the first sheet, and sent it to the printer in London by that post. Seven years of dulness had not rendered my pen unpliable when I thus took it up. Thought, sentiment, poetry, language, flowed as quick as I could write. The "Monthly Review" had said that there was a stiffness in my first poems, 1785: no one will accuse of stiffness the language of "Mary de Clifford."

But the success of this tale only reassured me for a moment. I relapsed for six years more; but not into the same abasement. I made several vain efforts to get into Parliament, and I accepted a troop in a regiment of fencible cavalry, which I held for two years, from 1795 to 1797. During all this time my elder brother's claim to the barony of Chandos was going on, which began in October, 1789, and ended in June, 1803. Of this I shall say more hereafter.

On retiring from my military occupation to Denton in May, 1797, I gave myself up to literature, as far as distracted affairs would permit me. I compiled a new edition of "Phillips's Theatrum Poetarum" with great additions, and collected "Memoirs of the Peers of James I." I also wrote my novel of "Arthur Fitzalbini," 1798; of which all the copies were instantly sold; and which gave great offence to some of my country neighbours, who supposed their characters alluded to.

I had bought the old manor-house and estate of Denton in 1792 of Lady Markham, widow of Sir James Markham, and sister to the first Lord Clive; she derived it by marriage settlement from her husband, heir-at-law to Captain Whorwood, R. N. The last possessor, who died about 1747, was son of Wortley Whorwood, of Stourton Castle in Staffordshire, who, having married a Dering of Surrenden, bought this estate of the family of Andrews, who had bought it of the Percevals. The Percevals purchased it of the Swanns, who had bought it of William Boys, the son of John Boys, Attorney-General of the Duchy Court of Lancaster in the reign of Henry VIII. William Boys had rebuilt the mansion, 1574.

Captain Whorwood was an eccentric man; and after giving by his will a life estate to his cousin, Mrs. Celia Scott, of Scott's Hall, gave the remainder to a college at Oxford; but not having complied with the statutes of mortmain, the remainder was set aside, and Sir James Markham, the next heir, had a verdict at law, and a decree of Chancery in his favour. But Mrs. Celia Scott did not die till 1785; and the house stood some years untenanted. About 1765, Mrs. Scott let it to the Rev. William Robinson, brother to Matthew Robinson, Esq., of Horton, near Hythe, (afterwards Lord Rokeby,) to whom also she gave the rectory of this small parish. A few months before Mrs. Scott's death, Mr. Robinson

resigned the living to Mrs. Scott's nephew, the Rev. Thomas Scott (who died 1792), and retired to his richer rectory of Burfield, in Berkshire. The mansion of Denton then again became uninhabited till July, 1792, during which time it had gone much to ruin; and I was so imprudent as to lay out nearly £8000 in repairing it. It was a roomy, massy mansion, with a noble gallery over the first story, seventy feet long; and a hall about forty feet square. The character of its position is best described by the poet Gray, in one of his letters to Dr. Wharton, 1767, in which he describes a visit to Mr. Robinson at Denton. In this mansion I resided till October, 1810; and during that time taking up the amusement of agriculture on a large scale, without looking into my bailiff's accounts, or attending to the details of the management, lost very large sums of money by it, notwithstanding that during all that time the prices of corn and stock were very high. My thoughts were always on my books and airy visions.

Bailiffs and stewards are very willing to receive every thing, and disburse nothing: when any thing is to be paid, they always come upon the master. No receiver of money will be honest, unless he is very sharply looked to: and in making up a long account, a cunning man can turn the balance either way in a surprising manner, as I have lately discovered to my utter astonishment and

great loss. Within a few days of writing this passage, I have discovered a fraud of this kind practised against me to the amount of £2200 and upwards, by means of calculations made by parties of whom I should not have had the least suspicion. But practised agents habitually do this, and in a course of ten or twenty years may thus absorb the largest fortune. It is common for these vile agents thus to swindle two or three thousand pounds a year, by means of alleged disbursements of what they never paid, so that it is necessary to call strictly for every voucher, and most carefully to examine it.

I have an aversion to accounts, and nothing but the most pressing necessity can induce me to examine them. An agent soon finds out this, and step by step goes on from robbery to robbery, till nothing will satisfy the rapacity of his appetite. The difficulty of the task accumulates from day to day; and who, that shrinks from examining a month's accounts, will undertake to examine those of a year?

CHAPTER II.

On what happiness depends—Character of author's life from age of thirty-five to forty-eight—His early marriage—His bad economy and pecuniary embarrassments—Various causes of imprudent expenditure—Emptiness of ostentation and luxury—Evils of excessive living—Weakening effects of debt on the mind—The felicity of a tranquil enjoyment of literature in a country retirement—Author's depression of spirits and loss of time in humble works—Still his occasional enjoyments derived from literature—His neighbours not literary—Expensiveness of his establishment—"Castle Rack-rent"—Infatuation—These things great obstacles to literary pursuits—Author's library—His children and relations—Obscurity of his retreat—His literary correspondents—His works of compilation—His disclaimer of vanity—His regrets—His belief in self-knowledge.

Our happiness depends rather on rectitude of thinking, than on outward circumstances. Our passions and feelings ought to be under the control of reason and knowledge. To state mere facts therefore, without proper comments upon them, is but barren information. I have spoken very briefly of my life at Denton from 1797 to 1810,—that is, from my thirty-fifth to my forty-eighth year. It was a life of mingled pleasure and extreme anxiety. I loved its quiet scenery, its solitude, its books, and literary occupations; but it would have required a gigantic strength, or obdu-

racy of mind, to have suffered its interposing persecutions, without the deepest disturbance of spirits. Among the most comfortless of human miseries, experience has taught me that pecuniary embarrassment stands pre-eminent; and the results of experience are among the prime matter which these Memorials undertake to communicate. What they do communicate must be done frankly, or it will be of no value.

I married at the early age of twenty-two,—much too early—without an income adequate to my habits, unless with great economy;—and I had no economy. I could not sift bills, cast up accounts, examine prices, and make bargains. There was therefore every kind of mismanagement; and I soon became involved. But I had no personal expenses; I neither cared for dress, nor equipages, nor out-door amusements, nor society. If I was left in quiet with my books and my pen, I was content. But quiet was never my destiny. The first involvement multiplies itself at every move. It destroys the freedom of the intellect and the heart; and drives one into a state of mistiness, which seeks extrication by the very means which augment it. It encourages self-delusions for the sake of momentary peace; and, like inebriety, buys oblivion at the expense of quickly-succeeding pain and sickness. The creditor, who thinks himself sure of his debt at last, delights in giving credit, because he has his debtor at his

mercy, makes his own usurious terms with him, and gorges on his blood. He who lives on credit does not dare examine bills; and the creditor charges according to the degree of his own wide conscience. Thus there is a difference of at least cent per cent in every article the debtor consumes; and two thousand pounds a year with him, will not go so far as one in the hands of him who pays ready money, and looks to his accounts.

It is true that there are various causes for excess of expenditure by an individual, besides carelessness. Perhaps vanity, and a false notion of the character of mankind, is the first. A mind not sound is apt to value others according to their station and riches; and as there is a natural passion in mankind to be well estimated, they are thus impelled to put on outward appearances, which may induce the belief that they possess a consideration and wealth which do not belong to them. The mind, that cannot purify itself from these vaporous delusions, must be unhappy either way. If it encounters superior fortune and establishment, while it puts on no appearance beyond its own humbler state, it either feels degraded, servile, and mortified, or is roused into anger and malignity. On the other hand, a false assumption of consequence by means of an expenditure which cannot be afforded, is followed by a degradation infinitely worse; because, in addition to the intervening pain by which it is sup-

ported, the actual inferiority of rank and money becomes lower in a course of time by the struggle. Right thinking, therefore, and dignity of sentiment on these important subjects, which occur every day of our lives, are absolutely necessary to our moral well-being.

Neither ostentatious displays, nor luxuries, increase our real enjoyments; and if we cannot afford them, we are relieved from the mortifications they keep off at far too high a price. It is rarely that they do keep off mortification, even for a time; for the world is too sharp-sighted not to detect false pretensions, and show which cannot be prudently supported.

Mankind always take the ill-natured side, and confound the expenditure of carelessness and erroneous calculation with the expenditure of vanity. There is nothing therefore more unfortunate, from whatever cause it proceeds, than excess of expenditure beyond income. The greater part of the harpies of society live and gorge themselves by taking advantage of this imprudence. Half the population of London live upon it; three-fourths of the ravenous lawyers live upon it; all sorts of agents live upon it; and half the demoralization of society is generated by it.

Pecuniary embarrassment weakens and chains the mind; and perhaps the worst effect of all is in the indignities to which it subjects its victim. There is no rule of life, therefore, more urgent

than to avoid it; nor has a careless man the slightest suspicion of what may be the effect of overlooking a comparatively slight error. I have mentioned an error of £2200, which, after many years, I never detected till a few days before I wrote the last sheet. Luckily the accounts are not closed. It was artfully concealed, and authorized by a table of calculations, which, though unintelligible to me, came to a result that seemed to justify it. My conviction was that there must be an error, but I could not detect it. At last the clue flashed on me in a moment; and then the mistake was so demonstratively gross, that it requires the most extraordinary stretch of candour to guess by what delusion the framer of the table could not himself see the deception. A careless man would have said, "Well! it is but £2200; let it go!" But it cut down a balance in my favour to a small sum; and if it had been paid fifteen years ago, when it occurred, would have then have made a difference to me, in its effects, of at least £10,000. If paid now, it will make a difference of at least half that sum, compared with the absolute loss.

Literature and a country retirement would have made life a paradise to me during this period, but for these causes. At times my spirit rose above these depressions; but it did not rise to its height: it rarely attempted original composition, but lingered in the humbler paths of a compiler,

which surely were beneath its inborn destination; for however meanly any other may estimate my powers, he certainly cannot deny, after the publication of my poems in 1785, at the early age of twenty-two, that I was capable of thinking for myself, and writing from the stores of my own intellect. I deeply lament that I lost so much of these years in such humble work. He who labours in a state of despondence can do little with effect: hope and confidence are necessary to fire and sustain the mind.

But such are the delightful abstractions of literature, that even thus I had many days of intense enjoyment. While I was copying and recombining, my own imaginations gathered round me; and I talked with the departed worthies of former ages, or gazed upon the gorgeous sights of chivalry; or walked with the spirits of the eloquent poets of more exalted ages in their "consecrated shades." But these were delusions, to which sad realities continually put a rude end. I dreaded the post; it was always the bearer of some vexation to me. I lived in peril, and slept in fever and anxiety. Fiends haunted me; the malice of the devil attended on my footsteps; the Jew stood ready with his knife to cut the pound of flesh from me; and "Detraction, Detraction," as Falstaff says, that foul harpy Detraction, like a croaking carrion-crow, was above, around, and beneath me. Yet my faculties were not torpified;

"Arthur Fitzalbini" was not the dull trickling of a torpified mind. I had many dull, brutal, and cruel neighbours, to whom a man of literature was a painful annoyance. They did every thing to traduce me, and in their society I felt as among a pack of hungry hounds, who would devour me. Yet I lived in a neighbourhood, which, nearly two centuries before, had been rendered classic by Hooker, the Digges's, the Sandys's, the Cowpers, the Gibbons, the Hammonds, the Kennets, the Somners, the Stanleys, the Bargraves, the Boys's, the Casaubons, the Philipots,—all names known in literature, and yet was adorned by Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, who, though she was rather too enamoured of her *Deal* neighbours, occasionally emerged into the world and the highest society. All their spirit was now gone; and nothing had descended either to their successors, or their posterity. On my fiery blood-horse I rode away from them, and left them to wonder at my reserve and surliness, and to give contumelious names to what they called my pride and my vanity and ridiculous pretensions. My timid friends bewailed my imprudence and intractability, and would have had me conciliate, and smile, and bend, and laugh at reproach, and turn calumny into a jest.

I lived at a vast expense without the smallest management: my household was numerous, though not for show; my butcher's weekly bill amounted to a sum that would appear incredible; and my

horses eat up the produce of all my meadows and oat-fields, though those which I held in hand were numerous. In short, mine was a sort of "Castle Rack-rent," in which all was disorder, and all was waste, while those that plundered me most, and lived on me most, abused me most; and I then spent more in a week than I now spend in three months. Confusion grew upon confusion; and every day it became a more tremendous task to look into things. This was exactly what my neighbours enjoyed. They saw me live at a vast expense without comfort, or that vain ostentation on which they valued themselves, and which they kept up at a fourth of the cost which was exhausting me, and diminishing that strength which they envied and hated.

My bitterest enemy cannot condemn the utter thoughtlessness of worldly affairs in which I then lived, more than I do. It was a sort of infatuation, which, having once been plunged into, I had not the courage to extricate myself from. I knew not what my income was; but no doubt my expenditure exceeded it by many thousands. I kept very imperfect accounts, and every one cheated me. I suspect that the tradesmen's charges were, in general, at a rate not short of from two to three hundred per cent.; and this is the way in which almost all tradesmen make themselves amends for want of punctuality in payment by their customers.

How much more I might have done in literature, if I had been in a state of less mental turbulence, I cannot venture to calculate: situated as I was, I never could command my faculties, nor collect them together. I worked therefore by fits and interruptions, and without the smallest method. I took up what was lightest, and could bear to be most easily laid down; and sought amusement and self-forgetfulness, rather than laborious occupation. But I did not entirely neglect what required some thought. I studied political economy with occasional bursts of industry, and communicated many articles to the daily or weekly journals, of which, as I have now lost them, I cannot be sure that experience has justified my calculations or reasonings; but, as far as I can trust my memory, they did not essentially differ from my present convictions. I was always an advocate for a liberal currency, and always expatiated on the vast accession to our national riches which it caused.

I had a good collection of biographical, genealogical, and historical works, as far as concerned England, and I was well conversant with their contents. I combined, compared, and criticized. Sometimes I rose early, and worked late: no sorrows or cares lessened my avidity for reading, though they often paralysed my power of composition. I had a feverish curiosity for new publica-

tions; and my booksellers, Messrs. Longman, had the goodness to supply them most abundantly,—and, I must add, a great part gratuitously.

At that time a new book was like wine to me, and produced a temporary delirium of oblivion. Then my enthusiasms were all awakened, in defiance of earthly oppressions. I had a noble room for my library, and beautiful scenery around me. Before me rose a hill skirted with wood; and behind, another hill more precipitous, at the foot of which the mansion stood, and over the brow of which was placed the dear old seat in which I was born: to the east ran those meadows of emerald green, of which Gray the poet speaks in his letters.

I had a large family of children, and saw but little company, except my own alliances,—visiting my mother at Canterbury once a week, and sometimes oftener; but with Mr. Harrison, who married my youngest sister, I was not upon terms, and therefore never entered his house: he was a man of a capricious temper and narrow mind—rich, fond of money, recluse, and dull. My two other married sisters had allied themselves in Hampshire; and of them and their husbands I retained my fondness to the last. With Mr. Hammond also, of St. Alban's Court, my first-cousin, I lived in friendship till his death in 1821, aged 69. His niece, Miss Payler, became the fourth wife of her cousin the late William Egerton, Esq.,

of Tatton Park in Cheshire. It will not be required of me to give characters of the individuals of the neighbourhood, whose names were never heard out of their own little circles.

But while others, whose powers I despised at the outset, were by perseverance emerging into public life, I was losing the vigour of my life in an obscure retreat—harassed more than if I had been running the most difficult course of ambition, and labouring more than would have conducted me to riches and honours; not advancing my mind by any regular processes of study, and sinking into the character of a mere amateur of books, having the ambition but not the faculties of authorship, and fit only to copy, and compile, and ride dull hobby-horses. I had never awakened the public voice in my favour; and who will examine for himself? If others were dissatisfied with me, I was not less dissatisfied with myself; and the want of self-confidence still increased my weakness. These were times, in which I should not have wanted strength, if it had been properly nurtured, and properly applied;—but "my fate forbade!"

In 1807 I received a beautiful letter from Mr. Southey, giving a character of John Bampfylde, which I had mislaid for more than twenty years, but lately recovered. I also corresponded with Hayley, Capel Lofft, Dunster, Archdeacon Wrangham, Gillies, Gilchrist, Lodge, Park, Dibdin, Pennington, Abbott, Sir Walter Scott, Bliss, Daven-

port, Blakeway, and many others. It was, I think, in 1806, that I undertook to give a new edition of Collins's Peerage, which was not published till July, 1812, in nine volumes, thick 8vo; and at this time also I began the "Censura Literaria," which was carried on to ten volumes; this was followed by the "British Bibliographer," four volumes; and "Restituta," four volumes, which last ended in 1816; so that I was engaged ten years in the conduct of a monthly periodical, which, it is admitted, has revived much curious matter of our old literature, then buried in scarce books. There was not much mind in all this; it was principally manual labour.

I will not give an opportunity to censors to accuse me of vanity and a false estimate of my own exertions. I know how little merit is to be placed on such tasks, and what small talents or knowledge they require: and if I was born fit for nobler works, they were a waste of my time. It was better so to do than to waste my years in utter idleness; but I will have the courage to say, that I deeply regret all these occupations of so important a portion of my life, because I feel that I was equal to a higher course of effort. My enemies, of course, will deny this; and I must leave it to the candid and unprejudiced to decide. I have scribbled enough in various ways to give ample materials for a judgment. If nature really bestowed on me any adequate faculties for a

nobler career, they must have occasionally broken out in spite of all obstacles—

Naturam expellas furcâ, tamen usque recurret.

If there was any latent fire in me, it must have occasionally put forth sparks. Believing, as I do, that the estimate of talent is not dependent on caprice,—but that talent and literary merit are positive, not relative,—I cannot suppose that accidental circumstances can entirely overcome them, though they may conceal their blaze. But perhaps it may be the case that no one can judge of himself; though this is a doctrine to which I cannot subscribe. I am of opinion, that he who is frank, can tell better his own faculties than any one else; but vanity or timidity prompts him to disguise, or shuts his mouth. Every one dreads the ridicule to which he, who praises himself, is exposed. Let an author pretend to originality in composition—can he deceive himself whether he borrows or draws from his own resources? It may be answered, that he may confound the fruits of memory with the fruits of thought. I am of opinion that he can rarely fall into this error: I boldly say, that I do not write from memory.

CHAPTER III.

Popularity in authorship the result of caprice or accident—But genius only will finally survive—Artifice will only have temporary success—The benefit of perseverance—Unexpected distance from the outset—Benefit of rivalry as a spur—Use of self-confidence—False estimate of the successful—Charge of querulousness—Good luck inebriates the ungenerous and the foolish—Innocence and sincerity will not shield a man from the world's intrigues and malice—Inborn energies cannot be extinguished; but, if checked, will burn within—Occasional society necessary—Author's literary acquaintance and correspondents—Author's coldness of manner on a first address—Advantages from the collision of conversation—Confidence—Love of books—Curiosity not duly regulated—Progress in the literary world not satisfactory—Occasional bursts—Attempt to be a candidate for Dover—Character of Charles Pybus—Pitt's fondness to patronize obscure young men—Lord Thurlow—Lord Grenville—Bishop Pretyman—Dr. Turner—Dr. Browne—Gray, the poet—Collins—Erasmus—John Bampfylde—Dr. Glyn—Treatment of Gray at Cambridge—Pitt not influenced by respect for the memory of literary men—Pitt made use of a few cunning old men of secondary talents and importance—Author never introduced to Pitt—Pitt rode hard, and hunted for mere exercise.

POPULARITY as an author is commonly the result of caprice, or accident, or management. They who have been successful resent this doctrine with anger. But the test of merit is long before it comes:—it comes at last. No one retains his popularity for many years who does not deserve

it. Artifice, which attracts at first more than simplicity, loses its interest in the end; for the object of artifice is commonly to produce novelty; and when the novelty is gone, the charm is gone. I believe nothing but genius, put forth naturally and frankly, will survive. Then the question will be asked, What is genius? I do not think it necessary to expound what has been done so often before. An author may know every rule of composition, and practise all skill; but it will not avail without genius:—the form may be preserved, the soul will be wanting. Labour will go for nothing; it can be borrowed, and transferred. A man of genius cannot even compile without showing something of his own spirit. Though he may extract and copy, still he will select and combine in a manner which mere labour will never reach.

Genius itself can never do what it would do but by gradual perseverance in effort. Therefore whatever may have been the degree of mind bestowed on me at my birth, it lost all progressive improvement by the habits and events of the period of life I have been describing. See men who pursue a public career of political services in the senate or in office,—how practice and experience strengthen them! At what an immeasurable distance they advance from the point whence they set out! But in my lonely course I had no rivals to spur me on, no companions by which to measure myself. I

saw mean men, therefore, every day perching over my head, and insulting me; and this added to the depression of my spirit. I estimated myself lowly; and who that estimates himself lowly can retain any energy? Nothing but hope and confidence can bring forth any one's powers.

I did not think exactly as I ought to have thought; I appreciated too highly those who were successful in the world. I was too much mortified by the malignant and incredible conspiracies carried on to injure, calumniate, and rob me; I should have broken from the nets thrown over me, like an enraged lion, and have torn them to atoms. Optimists cried out that I was querulous without reason, and that I had but the common fate. Is there then no difference in the fates of mankind? Have all equal trials—and is it always a man's own fault if he is persecuted? Are there no plots, no schemes of extortion? and does every thing go smooth, unless one excites foes, and throws stones in his own way?

Who are they who talk in this manner? Those whom ease and good luck have made insensible; who, when they feel no pain themselves, think that others who express pain, are pretenders, and wish to excite false pity!—just as the bloated wretch of wealth thinks that a beggar cannot starve, or want! just as Mr. *** ***, thinks that the process against debtors cannot be too severe, and wishes to continue to them the punish-

ment which is only justifiable for great crimes; nay, who would put an innocent man's liberty at the mercy of any perjured villain, who chooses to swear a debt against him.

I beg to assure these candid gentry that innocence and sincerity will not shield a man against the most deep-laid plots, and the most diabolical detractions; and that some are protected only by their insignificance, and their utter want of any quality or possession to raise envy. They who succeed best in the world are the crafty; and craftiness is always wickedness. It is the misfortune of those who are engaged in literary abstractions to lay themselves open to the cunning of worldly intriguers and extortioners, who, without any abilities, have their heads and hearts always sharpened by their own individual interests.

But, notwithstanding all the adverse circumstances which may prevent native energies from blazing out, they will burn within; but often burn till they consume the vessel that holds them. It is not desirable to live much in the country without occasional intercourse with the world, which ventilates both the head and the heart. At the same time constant society deadens both the feelings and the imagination. When I went to London, I occasionally met a generation of authors, most of whom are now gone to their graves:—Sir Walter Scott, —Sir James Mackintosh,—Charles Butler,—William Coxe,—Stephen Weston,—Dr. Burney,—

William Gifford, — Archdeacon Wrangham, — Blakeway, of Shrewsbury, — James Boswell, — Sir Alexander Boswell,—Perry, of the "Chronicle," —Rennie, the engineer, — Wordsworth,— Dibdin, —Lodge,—Atterson,—Sharon Turner,—D'Israeli, —the two Misses Porter,—Thomas Moore,—Alexander Chalmers,—Dr. Nott,—Park,—Lord Thurlow,—Horace Lord Orford,—Dr. White,—Hill,— William Combe,—Robert Bloomfield,—Baron Bolland,—Sir Mark Sykes,—Heber,—Richard Wharton,—Palgrave,—Mathias,—Sir Humphrey Davy, —John Aikin,—Dr. Rees,—Miss Benger,—Sir J. B. Burges,—Todd,—Jane Austin,—Davies Gilbert, &c. I shall probably say something of most of these hereafter, as far as delicacy will allow. On my first address I am as cold as ice, and petrify every one whom I meet. When the ice is broken, I am not without animation and frankness. In the collision of conversation I have found that many new ideas have been struck out, which would not otherwise have occurred, and many new lights have been thrown upon things. But I will not deny that I seldom come out of these contests without mortification. The least thing checked me; —a smile, or a frown, real or fancied, overpowered me; and contradiction either silenced me, or deranged me so, that I was all confusion. These are confessions, which to many may appear frivolous;—in my apprehension they are not uninstructive.

My ardor for books, which has now nearly ceased, was then unappeasable: but I read without method; and my curiosity was not always rational and well-directed. I seized old books and new; and I had a copious supply of modern publications and literary journals. The works in which I was engaged for the press occupied much of my time; and the long transcripts necessary were laborious and fatiguing. They were enough to suppress my imagination, and deaden my powers of original thought. It was not the mere love of fame, but the love of literary occupation, which was the spur that led me on—it was to escape from myself and my overwhelming anxieties. Meanwhile, I was not at all satisfied with the way I was making in the literary world: I was pursuing a humble path, not suited to my fiery ambition, and this produced a self-abasement which had an evil effect upon my energies. Sometimes bursts came upon me, and, in spite of my antiquarianism and bibliographical lumber, I wrote biographical, critical, and sentimental articles, which had some spirit. Such are occasionally intermixed in the "Censura Literaria." See the "Memoir of Charlotte Smith," and several others; and see the papers of "The Ruminator."

I think it was about 1806 or 1807 that I made an attempt to be a candidate to represent Dover; but there was no opening for me. One seat was at the command of the Lord Warden, and the other

of the Opposition, to neither of which parties I belonged. Pybus had been thrown out, when Sidmouth deserted him, and could never recover his seat. He had had a most fortunate fate in public life, if the gratification of a most unreasonable ambition could be called fortunate. His father was an Indian, who, when he came home, set up a banking-house in Bond Street: he was a native of Dover, whose father had been engaged in the packet service. He himself was a younger son, and intended for the bar, for which purpose he was attending a special pleader's office, when a vacancy happened in parliament for this town, from which his father sprung. He started from the desk, and boldly offered himself as a candidate against Trevannion, a zealous Whig. Pitt was pleased with his spirit, glad of his free purse, and took him by the hand. He fought a hard contest, but was beat. The general election soon followed, and he again started, and succeeded; and soon after made a set speech in the House, which pleased the Minister. To every one's astonishment he was soon after made a Lord of the Admiralty, and then of the Treasury, where he continued above ten years, till Pitt resigned. This was one of the young men whom Pitt so strangely promoted. He was quick and intelligent, with a pompous roll of words—but not sound. His vanity and pretension were ridiculous and offensive, and he took upon himself aristocratical airs, to

which he had not the smallest pretension. His finely-printed and ill-timed poem, entitled "The Sovereign," addressed to the Emperor of Russia, just at the moment he forsook the cause of the allies, brought him into much ridicule, especially as the author was then a Lord of the Treasury, and exhibited a large portrait of himself in that character before the poem. He died about 1809, before he exceeded a middle age; his spirits having long drooped at the fall from so unexpected a height.

Pitt loved to have about him this sort of subservient young men. It was a meanness in his character. He was not one who could "bear a brother near the throne," and he was willing to perform almost all the functions of state himself. He and Thurlow, the Chancellor, had a mutual antipathy; and at last he was obliged to get rid of the surly, sarcastic, contradictory old ruler of the courts, who yet had long possessed much of the King's ear;—so that the Premier had a contest of some difficulty to conquer. But this made Lord Grenville a Peer—he was brought into the upper House to manage the business there in Thurlow's room; for Loughborough was not to be trusted. Pitt had originally taken for private secretary his tutor, Pretyman, whom he soon promoted to the bishopric of Lincoln. This divine was a laborious and dull mathematician and arithmetician, in which latter capacity Pitt

often found him useful;—he had some talents and acquirements, brought out by toil and industry—but no genius or elegance. He was one of the first men to whom I was introduced at Cambridge, where he was then a resident Fellow of Pembroke Hall. His manners were cold, formal, uncouth, and repulsive; while his comrade, Dr. Turner, afterwards Dean of Norwich, was equally conciliatory. I drank tea with Dr. Browne, the head of the college, and friend of Gray, the recollection of whom made me look upon this respectable and amiable survivor with veneration. The walls of the college were sacred to me on this account; and I thought I saw the spirit of the bard two or three times glide across my eyes. It was my nature

> To seek each haunt, and love each sacred shade,
> By godlike poets venerable made!

When about the year 1779 I visited Winchester School, and saw the name of *William Collins* written on the walls, it ran through my veins, and filled me with waking dreams for a day or two. In my own college of Queen's, Erasmus resided for some time, and I never entered the rooms he inhabited without a delightful awe. I had not been three days at Cambridge before the little quarto pamphlet of *Sixteen Sonnets by John Bampfylde* was put into my hands, and I have never since forgotten them. At that time his commencing insanity was

talked of, and his attachment to Miss Palmer, and the harsh treatment he received from Sir Joshua Reynolds.

We had scarce any poets at that time at Cambridge, unless Dr. Glyn of King's: poetry was never in fashion there even in Gray's time; nothing was valued but mathematics. Gray was neglected, and often even affronted at this University, and it is strange that he continued to live on there; but it had many conveniences for a single man of small income, and there was the attraction of rich libraries—and, above all, habit. Probably more stir in society would have brought out more fruits from a copious mind, which suffered its riches to expire within it. Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, Spenser, Milton, Dryden—all led active lives. Byron was always in action. Indolence infallibly produces ennui and feebleness. What mind ever did so much as Burke's?—and all his days he was engaged in the bustle of public life.

Pitt derived nothing from the air of the place where Spenser studied and Gray passed a great part of his existence. He had no poetical ideas or feelings, and for this want many will say that he was the better statesman—an opinion which I cannot at all admit. If this theory be true, then Burke was a very bad statesman; and Clarendon, Somers, Bolingbroke, Pulteney, Fox, Chatham, Sheridan, Windham, and Canning, were also un-

fitted for such public services. Pitt did not see far enough, because he saw nothing by the blaze of imagination.

Pitt drew about him a few cunning old placemen; but they were mostly servile minds, and of a secondary class, such as Jenkinson, Dundas, George Rose, Sir James Harris, Welbore Ellis, William Eden, Lord Carmarthen, &c., who submitted without struggle to the ascendancy of his mind.

I was never introduced to Pitt: I saw him sometimes in the field, on hunting days, when he came down to Walmer. He seemed to delight in riding hard, with his chin in the air; but I believe had no skill as a sportsman—seeking merely exercise, and thinking, as Dryden says, that it was

> Better to hunt in fields for health unbought,
> Than fee the doctor for his noxious draught.

CHAPTER IV.

Easy to caution against rocks already split upon—Bad choice of residence made by the author; which, however, had many attractions—Notice of its recommendations—Canterbury Cathedral not properly filled—Recollection of Richard Hooker—Remembrance of a compliment paid the author by his father—Father's mental character—His marriage—Changed character of the resident gentry—Seeming fitness of the author's residence to nurse his studies—His love of literature—Notice of some of the author's literary correspondents; Park, Gilchrist, Hayley, Southey, Wrangham, Gillies, Lofft—Pennington—Character of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter—Mrs. Montagu and Lord Rokeby—Rev. Cooper Willyams—Pennington again—Evils of provincial clanship—Rector of Denton—Rev. John Lyon of Dover—Rev. Samuel Denne—William Boteler—William Boys of Sandwich—Edward Hasted, the historian of Kent—His son George Hasted—Rev. John Duncombe, translator of Horace.

It is easy to caution against the rocks oneself has split upon. I could not have fixed on a spot more unpropitious than that where I placed my abode. It was full of local jealousies and enmities, and the habits of the country gentlemen were not literary, nor were those of the surrounding clergy more so. I may say with confidence, free from boast, that I was not fitted for the narrow sphere into which I had thrown myself. It was a strange and unconquerable love of my native soil, or an

approach to it: it was scarcely half a mile from the spot of my birth. A residence of fifteen years on the Continent has entirely estranged me from all such mischievous prejudices.

But still I had many attractions and many enjoyments there. I had a spacious ancient house, a noble gallery, a handsome library, emerald meadows, spreading woods, varied ground, wild walks, and healthy air. I had a small parish under my own patronage, and uninterfered with, and I had several adjoining manors. I have the four neighbouring churches still under my nomination—Denton, Wootton, Swingfield, and Kingston—altogether of the value of about £1100 a year. I was in a peninsular corner, surrounded by the sea from the South Foreland to the North Foreland, from Dungeness Point and Hythe to Margate, and Whitstable, and Herne Bay. It was a delightful variety of country and picturesque scenery; and the Cathedral of Canterbury, wherever its noble and graceful tower could be seen, formed a beautiful feature. But it was richer in inanimate than in animate attractions. The metropolitan church ought to have been the reposing place of genius and learning. It was the feasting and sleeping spot of speakers' chaplains, and powerful noblemen's tutors. I scarcely remember in my time a literary man there, except Dr. Horne and Dr. Farmer. Before my own days, my own maternal grandfather, Dr. Egerton, and great-

uncle, Sir John Head, had both died possessed of prebendal stalls there; the former in 1738, the latter in 1769—the latter I can remember in my childhood. Dr. Wellfit, the senior prebendary, lately deceased, who was chaplain to Sir Fletcher Norton, when Speaker, held his stall forty-seven years.

I thought every day when I went to Canterbury, and passed in the valley the old rectory-house of Bishopsbourne, of humble Richard Hooker, and the mighty mind that produced the *Ecclesiastical Polity*. My father used to tell me to read that book as an example of a nervous, pure, and masterly style. Once, and only once, my father spoke to me in terms of literary encouragement; it was the last summer of his life; we were going for a ride: on some occasion he dropped the words "*your genius*," and they have ever since hung like a charm upon my ear. He was a stern-minded man, a severe reasoner, and a man of business, but grave and unimaginative. I never saw him take up, or heard him cite, a book of poetry or fiction. His agonies from the stone for nearly the last twenty years of his life were almost incessant. He had been a hard student in his youth; and being a younger brother, was intended for the church, and was a short time Fellow of Benet College, Cambridge; but he had some scruples, and having a competence, preferred independence to a profession, though the rectory of Wootton

awaited him. At the age of thirty-five he married a lady of the highest blood and alliances, and who finally brought him a good fortune. She was then only in her nineteenth year. This happened in March, 1747. She was born at Penshurst, in September, 1728, and died at Canterbury, in December, 1809, aged 82. On this marriage they continued to live at Wootton, where the whole remainder of my father's life was passed. One moiety of this ancient manor belonged to him by bequest of the will of an aunt, Mrs. Garrett, the sister of the last of the Coppins, who died 1701, and whose mother was a Gibbon of Westcliffe, half-sister to his maternal grandfather.

In the early part of the precedent century the families of gentry in this neighbourhood produced many men who made their names known in the world by their literary attainments—as Sandys, Digges, Cowper, Hammond, Harflete, Boys, Bargrave, Hales, &c., and Swift's ancestor was rector of Kingston, the next parish to Hooker's, Bishopsbourne. Dover produced Bishop White Kennet, and the ancestors of the very eminent Lord Chancellor Hardwicke; and at the adjoining parish of Westcliffe lived the ancestors of the historian of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire."

In the seclusion of this valley of Denton, with many comforts and beauties around me, it might seem that I could have pursued my studies, and exercised my imagination with great advantage;

but anxieties, which would never leave me in self-possession, more than counterbalanced all these advantages. I had my fits of self-oblivion, for books and composition with the pen were to me like wine. But hours of depression and despondence came, and broke all regular perseverance. I worked furiously while the fit was on; but laid no plan, and had no method. I was, in truth,

Every thing by fits, and nothing long.

I lived on literature; but it was the eagerness of fever, and ended in ennui. I panted for new publications, and devoured them. I counted the days, the hours, and the very minutes, till a new parcel arrived; and the first place I frequented when I went to London was a bookseller's shop. I have not even yet entirely lost that curiosity; though all opportunity is so nearly shut to me, that I have almost subdued the rage. Indeed, I have no longer the pleasure in reading which I used to have.

My correspondence with Mr. Park of Hampstead on the bibliography of old English poetry was one of my great pleasures; and this was augmented by my subsequent correspondence with other friends on the same subject. I also received many intelligent letters from Mr. Octavius Gilchrist, of Stamford, on the same pursuit. He was a quick man, full of ardour, yet laborious

and inquisitive; but he was jealous, irascible, and petulant, and I found that I had once mortally affronted him, when I had not the least suspicion of having done any thing to offend him. He complained of my cold manner, which I am afraid has affronted so many people. It has arisen from an unconquerable shyness, which has been mistaken for pride—a passion from which, I believe, that I am as free as most men: yet pride is more excusable than vanity.

I had a few letters from Hayley, who excelled in letter-writing, of which one was to thank me for my "Memoir of Charlotte Smith," not only in his own name, but in the name of her family; and I had the exquisitely beautiful and affecting letter from Southey, which contains the Memoir of John Bampfylde, printed in the *Anglo-Genevan*, 1831. Archdeacon Wrangham sometimes favoured me with letters full of elegant and varied erudition, and that amiableness and warmth of sentiment which shine so eminently in his character. Mr. Gillies also was a constant and inestimable correspondent, rich in intelligence, in poetic enthusiasm, and moral observation. Capel Lofft's letters were full of mingled ingenuity, curious but confused erudition, a benevolent and moral heart, and occasional bursts of genius. I hope none of these letters are lost; but they were left in disordered masses when I last quitted England, on 1st November, 1828. I had no literary acquaintance

in my own neighbourhood but my friend the Rev. Montagu Pennington, of Northborne, the nephew and biographer of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, the learned poetess, who died in January, 1806, or the following year, aged 86. I had never been introduced to that lady since I was a boy. She had cold, stiff, formal manners; and though in London she moved in high circles, she lived at Deal much within the limits of her own native acquaintance. She was the long and intimate friend of Lady B.'s aunt, Mrs. Montagu; but this led to no acquaintance on my part. Mrs. Montagu died in 1800, at the age of 80. Lord Rokeby, Mrs. Montagu's brother, followed her to the grave in November following, at the age of 87. He was an excellent but eccentric man, of whom I shall say more hereafter.

It happened that in 1806 I had the opportunity of presenting my old schoolfellow, the Reverend Cooper Willyams, Vicar of Exning, near Newmarket, to the Rectory of Kingston, at that time of the value of 6 or £700 a year (and now of the clear value of about £400 a year). He was the son of an old commander of the sea, who long stood at the head of the list, and had himself a great passion for the sea-service, which led him to the chaplainship of the Boyne, under Lord St. Vincent, in 1794, and again to the chaplainship of the Swiftsure, Captain Hallowell, at the battle of the Nile; of which expedition, as well as of that to

the West Indies, he published narratives: but it would be an useless disguise to say that he was a literary man. He was a boon companion of lively manners, who made himself agreeable to every company. He died in July, 1816, aged 54. He had suffered by the yellow fever in the West Indies, and perhaps never entirely recovered from it, but he was full of adventure and activity, and was ingenious with his pencil and his hands. He would have made a distinguished naval commander. His journals and drawings of the two expeditions I have noticed are intelligent and useful. No man loved hospitality more, or better delighted to open his house to new acquaintances. He was a brisk little man, who rode well, dressed well, and was adroit in all the common affairs of life. At the time I presented him to Kingston, Lord St. Vincent procured him another adjoining benefice, which he exchanged for Stourmouth, a still better living; and the two together were not of less value than £1100 per annum; though, for some whimsical reason, he was very unwilling to own this amount. His grandfather was also in the sea-service, and was a younger brother of a good Cornish family, which still exists. By his mother he was the representative of the Dineleys, and Goodyers of Worcestershire and Herefordshire; —once of ancient alliances, and large estates. Samuel Foote was his mother's first cousin. He

possessed a good portrait of Attorney General Noy, with whose family his own had intermarried.

Pennington, brought up by his learned aunt, naturally apprehensive, and with a great memory, was of a different cast. He loved literature;—but perhaps had seen so much of it from his childhood, as to be a little fastidious, and disinclined to that enthusiasm by which I was consumed. He is still living, and still continues one of my correspondents:—his delicacy will be offended if I say much more at present. He is both a sound divine, and a classical scholar, which latter he owes to his aunt, never having been at any public school. The late Archbishop gave him the Vicarage of Northbourne, and he is perpetual Curate of Deal, a preferment enjoyed for a long life by his maternal grandfather, Dr. Nicholas Carter. At the time I speak of the Downs were full of ships, and my friend's table was open to the officers of the navy, among whom I there met several pleasant men. It was delightful to escape from provincial localities and stupid clanships to such society. A large barrack of the Guards was also there, and in time of service these professions have a fund of conversation.

I know not how it happens, but I have not observed in other counties the same mean, bigoted, and ignorant clanship, as in East Kent. I never could discover any rule, or principle, by which it

took place. Few of the leading families are at original, or of long standing: the oldest houses are the Auchers, Digges's, Dennes, Barhams, Soptuans, Hardress's, Boys's, &c. have been long extinct, or have passed away: none of the terræ filii of any long date, unless the Oxendens remain. A great many new-comers have settled there; and some of these insinuate themselves into this clanship by some unaccountable means: certainly it is neither by estate, alliance, nor personal qualities. Out of the limits of this little circle, it is difficult to persuade them that there can be any importance. I do not mean to enter into their pedigrees, for most of them have none; and I myself remember some of them to have sprung from the very dregs of the people; for there is no district where property has oftener changed hands.

I have always observed that a steady and persevering, and unfeeling pretension, though founded on no solid ground of character, descent, or fortune, will succeed at last. People give way to a boring hardness, which never relaxes. Blindness and ignorance often make men self-confident. Genius and high qualities are sensitive, and shrink from rude attack; and the moment a brute sees the nerves and colour of the countenance move, he redoubles his senseless assault.

The rector of my parish was a dull man, in whom I could find no companionship;—a good sportsman, and a good rider;—sprung from a

family who had long made themselves of some little local consequence by electioneering influence at Hythe, where they were of ancient gentilitial record, which came within the cognisance of the visitations of the heralds. He was about my own age, and I had been at school with him; but he never looked into a book, and scarcely knew the title of one. He died early in 1827, aged 65. He married a daughter of Stephenson, the banker of Lombard Street. His elder brother was an attorney, and managed the estate for Lady Markham, of whom I afterwards bought it in April, 1792; but not before he had obtained the presentation of the rectory for his brother.

I knew an old clergyman at Dover of the name of Lyon—self-educated, uncouth, and in some respects almost illiterate; but a good sort of man—naturally ingenious, inquisitive, a good antiquary, and versed in some parts of science, especially electricity. He published many things in a style which wanted polish and attraction, and was, I believe, little known in the world. Some of his letters may, I believe, be found in Nichols's "Literary Anecdotes."

This reminds me of the Reverend Samuel Denne of Wilmington, near Dartford; a correspondent of Richard Gough, and of the "Gentleman's Magazine," on some of the pettitesses of antiquarian curiosity. His pedigree may be found in "Masters's History of Bennet College." He was a remote

branch of the very ancient family of Denne of Dennehill, which had sunk into yeomen. His father was Archdeacon Denne: but he was himself a mere plodding trifler, without talent or taste. I remember his person; a heavy, formal-looking old man, who would puzzle for weeks over the letters, or marks, or symbols, of an old Gothic inscription, or a brass-plate.

We had some other antiquaries of this class among us. William Boteler, a retired surgeon, of Eastry, and latterly a magistrate of the county, was a minute examiner of parish-registers and manorial deeds, and was enabled thus to correct some of the pedigrees of his neighbourhood with a good deal of exactness. His father was of the same profession, and they had anciently been of the rank of gentry; for he had a grant of arms to his ancestor, I think in the time of Henry VI., of which he was not a little vain. What estates they might have had, had been long gone. The character of his talents may be guessed by his pursuits. He was not pleasant in his conversation, or polished in his manner; and he estimated every one according to the date of his appearance in the Heralds' books. His eldest son is now recorder of Canterbury; and was, I believe, senior wrangler at Cambridge. I occasionally derived useful information from the father, in dates and transfer of neighbouring property.

William Boys, another surgeon, of Sandwich,

was considered a man of greater talent and deeper research. His "History of Sandwich" is held in esteem, though it is dry and dull. I once, about 1788, went to visit him at Sandwich, and dined with him. He was an undoubted cadet of the ancient family of Boys, of Fredville, in Nonington, branched off in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Sir Isaac Heard a long while fought and cavilled at the pedigree, but was obliged to yield at last to irresistible evidence: he endeavoured to dispute some of the early identities, till he could persevere in his vexatious objections no longer. Boys had a numerous family, some of whom are captains or admirals in the navy. He bore an excellent character; but was cold and heavy in his manner, and had not the appearance of a man of the world. Sandwich is a deserted port, of somewhat peculiar manners and habits; but which has produced many successful officers of the navy, on account of the patronage derived from its having been for many ages an Admiralty borough.

Edward Hasted, the historian of Kent, was a good topographical antiquary; but unsteady, and somewhat imprudent and eccentric in his life. He was a voluble and flighty talker, and did not secure respect for the knowledge he possessed. He generally inhabited one of the prebendal houses at Canterbury, where the Prerogative Office, and the Cathedral documents, afforded much aid to the execution of his great work. But as he con-

tinued to plunge into pecuniary embarrassments, he grew hasty, careless, and reckless; and the latter part of his "History" was brought out in a slovenly manner. He consulted many original documents, but not with much critical industry; so that neither his descent of property, nor his genealogies, will always be found minutely exact: but altogether it is a great work; and it is wonderful that it is done so well. I have seen no reason to suspect his honesty in this compilation. Lord Radnor took him under his patronage; and latterly, in his distresses, promoted him to a small school in Wiltshire. He had a large family. He was a little, mean-looking man, with a long face and a high nose; quick in his movements, and sharp in his manner. He had no imagination or sentiment; nor any extraordinary quality of the mind, unless memory. At one time, if I forget not, he had been chairman of the Quarter Sessions at Canterbury. I was at school with several of his sons; of whom, George died young, having shown great talents. I think he was destined to the law, and put into an attorney's office in London: I never saw any thing but good in him: he was first of the class to which I belonged; Abbott (afterwards Lord Tenterden) was second.

John Duncombe, the translator of Horace, was at this time Six-preacher at Canterbury, and rector of Herne. He was a sort of general *littérateur*,—very multifarious in his erudition, but not

very exact; neglected and uncouth in his person, and awkward in his manner; a long face, with only one eye, and a shambling figure; his pockets stuffed with pamphlets; his manner hurried, and his articulation indistinct. He reached a certain point in every thing, but in nothing went beyond mediocrity. The translations of Horace by himself and his father are miserably dull. Nothing was alleged against him, unless perhaps that he was mean in pecuniary matters; but he had not the art of making himself respected. He married a daughter of Highmore the painter, who was one of Samuel Richardson's blue-stocking circle, and survived him many years, leaving an only daughter, also since dead. He himself died about 1786, aged about 55.

CHAPTER V.

Nothing learned from Kentish literati—Turn for poetry not encouraged at Cambridge—Warburton, rector of Lydd—Martin Benson—Brother of Rogers the poet—Stebbing Shaw, the historian of Staffordshire—William Bagshaw Stevens, of Repton, the poet—Miss Seward—Mr. Mundy—Sir Brooke Boothby—Porson—Bishop Halifax—Bishop Mansel—Dr. Lort—Dr. Robert Plumptre—Archdeacon Charles Plumptre—Plumptre family—Joseph Dacre Carlyle—Rev. Fyshe Palmer—Rev. Charles Powlett—Mr. Temple, rector of St. Gluvias—Lord Tenterden—Rev. John Walters, Welsh poet—Charlotte Smith—William Cowper—Dr. Glyn, of King's—Dr. Farmer—Dr. Bennet, bishop of Cloyne—Mathias—Professor Symonds, of Bury—Bishop Watson—Cambridge Graduates who attained honours—Mathematical studies too exclusively encouraged there—Few who attained honours afterwards distinguished—The most eminent lawyers in 1782—Bench of Bishops—Bishop Porteus—Lord George Murray—Bishop Marsh—James Six.

I DID not get much from the Kentish literati I have named: they were not of my cast. If I had been acquainted with Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, I might have learned something worth knowing. At college my turn for poetry was not much fostered; Cambridge was never the seat of the Muses. My tutor, Milner, afterwards dean of Carlisle, was a man of science, not of imagination. I knew

but one man at Cambridge who wrote English verses,—and those not very good ones,—Warburton, afterwards Archbishop's chaplain, and rector of Lydd, in Kent; where he died a few years ago. One of my college companions was the Reverend Martin Benson, of Jesus College, with whom I had been at school, and who lately died at his rectory of Merstham, in Surry, aged 72. He was son of a prebendary of Canterbury, and great nephew of Dr. Martin Benson, formerly bishop of Gloucester. For more than forty years he had also held the chapel at Tunbridge Wells. He was a good man, and published a volume of sermons; but had not great literary talents. His first wife was his first-cousin, a niece of Lord Chancellor Bathurst, and grand-daughter of Pope's Lord Bathurst.

One of my fellow-collegians was a very clever man,—a brother of Samuel Rogers, the poet: he was afterwards called to the Bar: whether he is living, I know not; I have not seen him for more than forty years. He had an amazing memory, and read much; but I never saw any of his compositions. I was intimate with few men of my own college: I was familiar with Stebbing Shaw, afterwards the historian of Staffordshire, known for his good nature, and desire to be literary, but not for his taste or talent. He had a benevolent temper and great industry; and died in the flower of his age, from a mental fever derived from bodily dis-

organization, in November, 1802, aged 41. He was seized at the bathing-place of Sandgate, near Folkstone, whither I hastened to pay him a visit in October; but he was so ill that I was not permitted to see him. My intimacy with him had strengthened and increased to the last. His death deeply affected me; but it was a happy release. By his perseverance he had collected invaluable materials for his "History." I know not what is become of them. He left a sister, who did not survive him many years. His father had bought of Lord Stanhope two turns to the rectory of Hartshorn, in Derbyshire, of which he died possessed. To this place I accompanied him on a visit to his father, in August, 1789. His passion to be an author was great; his ability very feeble.

With him I visited his friend and old master, the Reverend William Bagshaw Stevens, who presided over Repton School; a man of some genius, and a poet, above mediocrity; but a little too laboured. He was a friend of Miss Seward, and caught something of her fondness for big words and glitter. He was a native of Abingdon, and had been a demy of Magdalen College, Oxford, where he had learned to worship the memory of Collins; and of whom he had collected a few anecdotes, which I transcribed through Shaw's communication, but unfortunately had them stolen from me before I left Cambridge, in 1783. The

ambition of Stevens was to write grave poetry; but his turn was sharpness and sarcasm. In society he seemed little inclined to talk gravely; but rather had an appetite towards the ridiculous, and to an insight into the follies of the human character. Shaw had a great veneration for him, and a great opinion of his integrity and trust-worthiness; but he did not appear to me to have the art of engaging confidence at a first appearance. It seemed to me that his application to poetry was accidental, not inborn. He was a good scholar, but critical and fastidious. His person was large and heavy; he had a yellow fairness, and light inexpressive eyes. He died in 1800, not much exceeding the age of 40. He published a pamphlet of odes, when at Oxford, now very little known; afterwards a laboured poem in blank verse, called "Retirement;" and translated some odes of Horace, inserted in the "Gentleman's Magazine," which have not much merit.

There was a little coterie of authors in that neighbourhood: Miss Seward; Dr. Darwin; Mr. Mundy, of Mark-eaton; Sir Brooke Boothby; Mr. Stevens, &c. Mundy was a man of genius, as his "Needwood Forest" proves; but having been severely treated by the Reviews, on the publication of his first collection of poems, he printed privately his future compositions, and would never allow them to be published. His son lately represented the county of Derby. The poet

was nephew of Sir Robert Burdett, and married his daughter. He was a shy, recluse man, of rather a morbid temper; a great sportsman, and an active magistrate; much respected, and of considerable influence in his county. His poetical talent lay in the description of natural scenery. He lived to an advanced age. He was a well-grown, dark, sallow-looking, grave-countenanced man, with rather high features, and a long face: so at least he appeared to me; but I only saw him once.

Miss Seward had not the art of making friends, except among the little circle whom she flattered, and who flattered her. I never saw her myself, but judge only from the manner in which she was spoken of. My friend Shaw, whom she noticed, thought her the greatest of poetesses. She both gave offence and provoked ridicule by her affectation, and bad taste, and pompous pretensions. It cannot be denied that she sometimes showed flashes of genius; but never in continuity. She believed that poetry rather lay in the diction than in the thought; and I am not acquainted with any literary letters, which exhibit so much corrupt judgment, and so many false beauties as her's. Her sentiments are palpably studied, and disguised, and dressed up. Nothing seems to come from the heart, but all to be put on. I understand the André family say, that in the "Monody on Major André," all about his attach-

ment, and Honora Sneyd, &c., is a nonsensical falsehood, of her own invention. Among her numerous sonnets, there are not above five or six which are good; and I cannot doubt that Dr. Darwin's hand is in many of her early poems. The inequalities of all her compositions are of the nature of patchwork.

I was acquainted with Sir Brooke Boothby: he had too much the manners of a *petit-maître;* but he had talents as well as accomplishments, though not of the first order. Every thing followed some model, and nothing seemed natural, nor struck home. All appeared to be acquired taste, which he executed with some adroitness. He was a vain, ambitious man; very fond of tawdry, and never appearing in a natural character: still he was so far accomplished, that he could be agreeable for a little while, though he never gained one's confidence. I remember his giving a dinner at a hired house in Canterbury, at which I was present, where he had for that one party the whole walls of the room newly painted with designs of gaudy flowers, as floors are often chalked for dancing! I never saw his paternal house at Ashbourne, in Derbyshire; but I understand that it was whimsically fitted up. I believe Sir Brooke died at Boulogne, about 1823, at an advanced age.

I was once or twice in company with Porson at college. His gift was a surprising memory: he appeared to me a mere linguist, without any ori-

ginal powers of mind. He was vain, petulant, arrogant, overbearing, rough, and vulgar. He was a great Greek scholar; but this was a department which very few much cultivated, and in which therefore he had few competitors. What are the extraordinary productions which he has left to posterity? Where is the proof that he has left of energetic sentiments, of deep sagacity, of powerful reasoning, or of high eloquence? Admit that he has shown acuteness in verbal criticism, and verbal emendation;—what is that? He was one of those men, whose eccentricities excited a false notice. The fame of his erudition dazzled and blinded the public.

Dr. Halifax, afterwards bishop of Gloucester, whose law-lectures I attended, was a mild, courteous little man, accomplished with learning, and of a clear intellect; not only of no force, but even languid. He did not long enjoy his bishopric. He married a daughter of Provost Cooke, whose son I remember tutor of King's, and an eminent Grecian, who afterwards fell into the deplorable calamity of mental alienation. He was a large man, of a round florid countenance, fond of society and free living.

Dr. Lort Mansel, Spencer Perceval's tutor, by whom he was afterwards elevated to the mitre, was considered one of the wits of the University, and not remarkable for the strictness of his conduct or opinions. His tart epigrams circulated

among the young and the old; and he was much feared. His uncle, Dr. Lort, had been an Archbishop's chaplain, and a great collector of rare books of old English literature.

Dr. Robert Plumptre, the president of our college of Queen's, was a younger brother of our neighbour, John Plumptre, Esq., of Fredville, with whom my family was intimate. He was a dull man, of little erudition, who pronounced a Latin oration full of false quantities, which caused the following line, when speaking of Professor Roger Long, to be on every one's lips;—

Rogĕrus immēmor Rŏbĕrtum denōtat hebētem.

Another brother, Archdeacon Charles Plumptre, lived much with the Hardwicke family, and was a sort of petty literary amateur, who wrote petty attempts at *jeux d'esprit* on cards, in a formal hand, and wore a cauliflower wig curled in the sprucest manner: but he was a good sort of harmless, round-faced, little man, courteous to all, and always ready to do good-natured acts. The family had been settled for centuries in the town of Nottingham, and had represented it at various epochs in Parliament, from the time of the Plantagenets. Their ancestor, Dr. Fitzwilliam Plumptre, a physician, who is mentioned in Gervase Holles's "Memoirs," published a rare little volume of Latin epigrams in the reign of Charles I. John Plumptre,

the elder brother, had an estate of about £1500 a year;—on which he contrived without debt to keep up three houses—at Nottingham, and Fredville, and in Jermyn Street; to represent his native town in several parliaments, till 1780; and to support a large establishment, never going out without six horses to his carriage, when in the country, with two or three outriders. He obtained Fredville by his first wife, a daughter of the first Sir Brook Bridges, of Gordnestone, by whom he had no issue; and married, secondly, Miss Glover, cousin of Leonidas Glover. His grandson now represents the eastern part of the county of Kent: a very good sort of man; but brought in by the Methodists and other Church Dissenters: he married a sister of Methuen, of Wiltshire. His father died in 1827, aged 60; and his aunt was wife of Alderman Sir Richard Glynn, the banker. The mother of the present M.P. is sister of the late Dr. Christopher Pemberton, the physician. The Reverend James Plumptre, the author, is a younger son of the president of Queen's.

There was a Fellow of our college in my time, of whose literary acquirements I then heard nothing, but who afterwards in some degree distinguished himself—the Rev. Joseph Dacre Carlyle, the orientalist. He died at a middle age. He was a tall, dark, thin man, of reserved manners and recluse habits. I believe that he was of

a noble Scottish origin. I had scarcely any acquaintance with him.

I knew well a Fellow of a much senior date, who had been a familiar of my elder brother, and who came at last to an untimely end—the Rev. Fyshe Palmer. He was very anxious to make a radical and a dissenter of me, and crowded my table with all sorts of mischievous pamphlets, as these propagandists are in the habit of doing; but he never could make the least impression on me. In London he carried me to political meetings, where I heard Horne Tooke, and the Duke of Richmond, and John Cartwright, speak;—the former with extraordinary acuteness; the two latter with a sleepy dulness. He was an eccentric man, of a quick but not solid intellect; meaning well, but deficient in prudence and common conduct. I do not think that his mind was quite sound. The punishment for his political offence, pronounced by the Scottish judicature, was cruelly severe. About 1783 he spent a month or more at my mother's house at St. Lawrence, on a visit to my brother.

I saw much occasionally of my friend, the Rev. Charles Powlett, the grandson of the Duke of Bolton and Polly Peacham, and the translator of Huntingford's "Monostrophics;" but it is long since I have heard of him, and I cannot discover whether he is living or dead. He had a lively under-

standing; but latterly an unfortunate deafness rendered the intercourse of conversation with him difficult. He married a daughter of Mr. Temple, rector of St. Gluvias, in Cornwall, whose character of Gray is inserted by Mason in the Life of that poet.

Of my friend Lord Tenterden, with whom, of all my acquaintance, my time was most spent, I shall speak hereafter at large.

About the year 1782 a small pamphlet of poems fell into my hands, by the Rev. John Walters, who had gained an Oxford prize for English verses, of which I forget the title, unless it was "The Bodleian Library." A few short inscriptions, after the Greek manner, pleased me very much; and there was one line,

Echo and Silence, sister Naids,

which suggested my own sonnet on Echo and Silence. He died young, holding at that time, if I am not mistaken, the situation of master of Ruthyn School, in Wales, of which country he was a native.

I did not see Charlotte Smith's "Sonnets" until after I had published my own; but when I met with them they filled me with delight, and to this day I equally admire them. The first time I came to the knowledge of Cowper's "Task" was by an extract in the "Monthly Review," and I think that this was in November, 1785.

Dr. Glyn, the most eminent physician at Cambridge,—a man of rough and eccentric manners, who prided himself on saying whatever came uppermost into his mind,—had the character of genius. Early in life he had won a Seaton prize, and now he was a most enthusiastic advocate for the genuineness of "Rowley's Poems." He would bear no contradiction, and fell into a fury at an expression of doubt. I do not recollect what part Dr. Farmer took; probably the contrary side; but Farmer was complacent and indolent, and sat surrounded by his cats and his books, and lost in his own bibliographical amusements: he was lax in his discipline, and good-natured in his manners. Bennet, then tutor, afterwards bishop of Cloyne, was a man equally easy. Mathias, occasionally resident, and who had lately published some Runic Odes, was also a Rowleian, and put forth a pamphlet on the subject. I was not then acquainted with him. Many years afterwards I was introduced to him at my brother's house at Wootton, and in 1820 I saw him at Naples. He must now be more than an octogenarian.

Dr. Symonds was then professor of Roman history. In 1796 I dined with him at his handsome house on the hill above Bury St. Edmunds, in company with the other officers of the regiment of Fencible Cavalry, in which I was then serving. He was a tall man, of pleasing manners and intelligent conversation. The professorship

which he held had been held by Gray before him. He was, in the female line, descended from the noble family of Jermyn, whose estates lay in that neighbourhood.

Dr. Watson, who had not then been elevated to a bishopric, was during my residence considered one of the most distinguished characters of the university; nor was he less esteemed because he was not thought quite orthodox. His "Autobiography" is a work which has been surely praised more than it deserves. His vanity was great; and his discontent, at not obtaining farther advancement, rather more querulous than decent. His politics were sometimes those of a factious partisan, which from a head covered by a mitre can never be justifiable. He had rather the mechanical attainments of a scientific pupil of the schools of the north of England, than of an elegant classical scholar: but he had a vigorous and analytical mind, yet nothing of imaginative genius.

It is curious to look over the list of names of those who took honours on their degrees at Cambridge from 1754 to 1823.* Of two thousand nine hundred names how very few afterwards obtained in life the smallest distinction! even of the septuagint of senior wranglers very few became afterwards known.

* See Archdeacon Wrangham's "Sertum Cantabrigiense," privately printed, Malton, 1824. 8vo.

Mathematics, by which the honour of senior wrangler is attained, are open to mechanical industry; and they learn their lessons most perfectly whose impressions are not disturbed by original and inventive faculties working from their own minds. Classical studies and moral philosophy were little regarded at Cambridge in my time; and Mason, in his "Life of Gray," says the same of his age: but no university, nor any age, produces many poets. Mathias, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Wrangham, were of Cambridge; Bowles, Carey, Southey, Richards, and Milman, were of Oxford. In old times Cambridge beat Oxford; as we have Spenser, Milton, Cowley, Dryden, and Gray, and latterly Byron. The Scotch and the Irish contend with us by Thomson, Beattie, Burns, Scott, Goldsmith, Sheridan, and Moore. Lord Lyndhurst was second wrangler; Chief Justice Tindal was eighth wrangler, and first medallist; Judge Littledale was senior wrangler; Baron Bolland was seventh wrangler; Archdeacon Wrangham was third wrangler, and gained almost all the prizes.

Fame is the spur by which almost all noble efforts are made. How happens it then, that so few go on after they have once obtained university distinctions? Are they exhausted? Do they rest upon their laurels, or are the requisite tests of talent and mental culture fallacious? I should assuredly say the latter in the majority of

cases, not in all. Gray, Wordsworth, and many others, attained no college honours!

When I came to London, Erskine was taking the lead at Nisi Prius, and Scott was emerging into notice in Chancery; Lord Mansfield, at a venerable age, still presided over the King's Bench; and Thurlow, with his dark countenance and beetle brows, awed the court of Chancery. In the senate, Burke, Fox, and Pitt, had an ascendancy, which has never yet been rivalled. Porteus was then the popular preacher of the Bishops. His manner was mild, but somewhat languid, and not always purified from original vulgarity. I knew him as rector of Hunton, near Maidstone, when I was a little boy nine years old. He was then awkward, reserved, and somewhat pedantic in his manner and mien. Beattie, in letters published by Sir William Forbes, has described a visit paid to him at Hunton with much fondness. Lord George Murray afterwards held that rectory, and thence was promoted to the bishopric of St. David's. I remember Lord George—a benevolent man, and was deeply afflicted by his melancholy fate. His son is now bishop of Rochester, and rector of old Richard Hooker's benefice of Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury.

Of the present bench of Bishops, many were infants, or unborn, when I arrived at manhood, though among them is one who quitted the school,

at which I was brought up, before I entered it; I allude to Dr. Herbert Marsh, bishop of Peterborough. I remember his coming into the school-room at his first summer recess from Cambridge, and making for me a Latin epigram as my first school-exercise, when at twelve years old and a half I was removed from Maidstone school to Canterbury. His father was minister of Feversham; he had been an old schoolfellow of my father and uncle, and sprung from a family in the same neighbourhood, which had been resident for generations at Brandred, in the parish of Acryse, about four miles from Wootton. Bishop Marsh was second wrangler in 1779.

His cotemporary and schoolfellow, James Six, a native of Canterbury, was eighth wrangler in 1778, and carried off several of the prizes. He was an excellent classical scholar, a copious translator of German poetry, and died young at Rome about 1786, being then tutor to Sir John Stanley, of Alderley.

CHAPTER VI.

Author's desire of insight into character—Author's life, though recluse, not unobservant—His passion for literature—His compositions unequal—Will the good parts counterbalance the bad?—Opinions of "Edinburgh Review" as to inequalities—Fame acquired by accident or management—Effect of want of encouragement—Permanent fame often slow—Strength of mind often increases with advance of years—Desire of distinction often beneficial—Some contend that genius is independent of circumstances—Education and art cannot supply genius—There can be no good poetry without invention—What is the true purpose and effect of poetry—The injury of false canons of criticism—Innumerable prime subjects for poetry still left untouched—The most precious parts of life lost by discouragement—How far plot is necessary, or of primary excellence—Stories must be credible—How far frequency or infrequency of production proves facility—Authors often discover too late where their own strength lies—Leisure enjoyed by the author at Denton—Two autumns spent at Sandgate in 1804 and 1805—Description of the neighbourhood of Sandgate—Seats in the neighbourhood—Mr. Brockman, Mr. Deedes, Lord Rokeby, Mr. Papillon—These two autumns dwell on the author's memory—Author's regret that such autumns cannot return—Old age—Age of some near relations of the author—Sir George Ent—Mrs. Egerton—Mild air of Sandgate compared with that of the inland—Folkstone the Montpelier of England—Not now a place of trade—Anciently the Dixwells made their fortune there—Bouveries—Oxendens—Character of Sir George Oxenden, and of Sir Henry—Sir Henry's handsome mode of living—Estates of Kentish gentry—Luxurious habits of Kentish farmers.

I HAD always a great desire to penetrate into men's characters, and to view them unmasked.

The first sight was apt to dazzle and confuse me, but by degrees I inspected them calmly. My imagination in the quiet of lonely contemplation could lay their internal movements open to me. There were those who thought that I saw every thing only through the mists and vapours of an excited mind; but it has not been found that my discriminative portraits have been false or discoloured. I have at least sought truth with honesty, for loose panegyric and malignant severity are both mischievous, though not equally so.

My life has been altogether a recluse one; yet not without some opportunity of varied observation: naturally thoughtful and sensitive, but a small part of my long life has passed in indolent torpor. I was not apt to let things pass by me unheeded; and my unbroken passion for literary composition from boyhood always accustomed me to embody in language the ideas which were coursing in multitudes through my brain. I never could limit my considerations to the petty concerns of my own individual affairs, but was always straying abroad into the wide world, far remote from selfish interests. I cannot be sure of other men's feelings; but I never met with one who seemed to have the same overruling passion for literature as I have always had. A thousand others have pursued it with more principle, reason, method, fixed purpose, and effect: mine I admit to have been pure, blind, unregulated love.

The fruit has been such as mere passion generally produces—of little use and no fame. Wasted energies have ended in languor, debility, and despondence. "Sir E.," said an observer to a friend, "has, I know, written copiously; but I cannot undertake to say how well." He was afraid I should engage in a task, of which nothing would have induced me to incur the burden of the thankless office. The request was made to me by one of his relations. I had already declined it. Judgment will be finally pronounced upon me without regard to the opinions of friends or enemies.

A great mixture of hasty, irregular, ill-digested composition will undoubtedly be found in the numerous publications I have ventured through the press. But is there honesty, and freshness, and warmth, and moral feeling, and occasional novelty? Is it the ebullition of native thought, or the smooth mechanical listlessness of composition by rule? Is there any dignity of aspiration, or tenderness of sentiment? Does the heart speak, even if the understanding sleeps? If yes, then I am safe. What is laboured will not, however correct it may seem, have long life. Inequalities will never sink what is animated by vigorous and genuine ingredients. Horace says, "Ubi plura nitent," &c. &c. Many blemishes will be forgiven. But are inequalities blemishes? I think not. There is an admirable article on this point in the "Edinburgh Review," about 1817, on Moore's

"Lalla Rookh." What so fatiguing as an interminable smooth plain, or a shaven lawn?

There is no use in repeating by memory what others have said before, and citing authorities for every opinion laid down. Such secondary writers may labour mechanically, and it is proper that they should do their work in an artist-like way. But what is done by art can be eclipsed by art; and these artists swallow up one another as wave swallows up wave. What is artificial is not made to interest long; and when it dies, or declines, it never revives.

Authors often attain fame by mere accident; others say by management. Much undoubtedly is to be done by management, as every publisher well knows. But who can write without encouragement? How can he properly estimate his own strength? Few therefore, who are not encouraged, persevere till the strength of their genius comes out. He who expects no reward works carelessly and languidly. He cannot entirely abandon the chase; but he has no energy, because he has no hope. Men who go on successfully, and with cheers, often show at last faculties which no one suspected to be in them, and which they did not even themselves suspect; while others, depressed and blighted, let great genius sink into imbecility and despair. How often, in the course of my clouded life, have I lost my self-complacence, and envied every blockhead who came near

me! How often have I seen the aspiring, vain, and empty coxcomb, blown on the wings of Fame, till he burst with pride, arrogance, and self-exultation! How could he doubt the justice of popular plaudits! The wind blows in their favour, and they cry,

It blows, and, as it blows, for ever will blow on!

But, on a sudden, the blast changes its direction, and down they fall to the ground, crushed to rise no more. It is better never to rise, than to rise with the chance of such a fall.

The fame that is sure is commonly, though not always, slow: it was slow in Scott, but not in Byron. Scott greatly improved under the encouragement of fame, and so did Byron: but fame will draw forth those who have not solid pretensions beyond their strength. Dryden improved to the last; so did Milton; so did Burke. Duly cherished, and kept in due exercise, the mind must improve. When I lose a day of mental occupation, I lose my spirits, and am filled with regret.

He who is willing to enjoy the present moment, —then to die, and leave no trace of his existence behind him,—may do so if he can reconcile it to his own self-complacence. But it does not seem to be the sort of self-complacence which distinguishes human nature from brutes. We are taught to aspire, and to endeavour to make wings to rise above oblivion, when our bodies moulder in the grave.

But it will be observed how few can do this with success. Is it, then, to be our fate to be tormented with a desire of what so few are formed by nature to attain? But in proportion as the inborn faculties are narrow, the desires are probably limited to narrow objects and narrow means. Every one flatters himself that he can carve out for himself some ground of distinction. We must keep our mind in constant advance, by a progressive attention to those objects and means. To rest upon our oars, and work only at long intervals, will not do.

Some think that genius will equally show itself in sunshine or in shade; and therefore, that unpropitious circumstances will not account for mediocrity of merit. The lives of unfortunate men of genius do not justify this opinion, nor does reason justify it. Mental energy is partly generated by animal spirits; and who that is discouraged and neglected, can feel the same animal spirits?

There are writers upon temporary topics, who are mere shuttlecocks battled backwards and forwards for the occasion,—and then let drop, and be trodden in the dust as worn-out instruments; but in their little day they enjoy an empty and casual triumph. It is not what they write that gives the interest, but the excited mind of the reader, which throws its own colours on what is written.

All the advantages of education and art will do nothing without genius; and with how few, or

rather without any of these, the bright flame of real genius will come forth. Witness in our days Burns and Bloomfield. They have some advantages over those better instructed, because they have stronger hope. Many writers of verses have a powerful memory, without any imagination at all; and some have a fancy which reflects with the faithfulness of a mirror, but cannot invent. But nothing less than invention—and noble and tender invention—will make a poet of any high order. We may give to our characters the lovely sensibility and lofty thoughts which only exist in a few, and we may show the forms of humanity free from its blemishes and alloys; we may look on female beauty, and imagine that there dwells in it an angelic spirit;—these are within the province of the truly inspired bard. But such notes are not reached except by the highly favoured of heaven. Thousands have felt the dim visions within, but have not been able to embody them: they have gone to their graves dissatisfied with themselves, and unknown to the world.

False canons, and false ill-tempered criticism, have often silenced genius, and suppressed the bold and eloquent expansions to which nature would have led it. When imagination is left to itself, it will generally take the right course; and the richest genius is least fitted to reach technical merits. Flowery language is a proof of a minor

ingenuity. To have fine thoughts and sentiments is one thing; to embody them in words, another. In some they slumber, and are only awakened by sounds and signs from without: these are they who have the affections without the faculties of the muse.

It is grievous that when there are so many subjects for the illustration of truth by probable fiction left untouched, so little is done. I am convinced that it arises from mistaken notions of the proper purposes and ingredients of poetical invention; and that childish gewgaws are demanded rather than the native combinations of a visionary mind.

When a man's life is prolonged, how much he might do by industry acting upon inborn endowment! But what time is thrown away through discouragements and errors! I look back with affright on the time I have lost, seeing how little I have done. But, then, to sustain long fictions requires a steadiness of feeling and spirit which few possess. It is easy to execute what may be effected by one fit of exertion; but when the fit is over, it is difficult to renew it. On this account long poems are apt to be dull and flat. Every subject, after long thinking upon it, loses its raciness; and this is the reason why polish and pruning always destroy the spirit of a composition. He who cannot strike out his thoughts at

once, will have them evaporate. High excitement produces eloquence, and then language comes out in a torrent.

I can never allow that poetical fictions, designed with genius and skill, are uninstructive. They are the best vehicle of those sublime mental associations which exalt the noblest part of our human state of being,—which show nature in its fairest colours, and select the most delightful portions of our mortal destiny. I persuade myself it would not have been difficult to invent and fill up long epic tales to this purpose. But I do not think that I could have succeeded in what is called deep plot. This art of plot is, I am aware, very much sought, and highly valued ; but its attraction does not last beyond a first perusal. The effect that results from surprise ceases when the story is known. Thoughts and sentiments, and descriptions, which derive their force only from position, are of a secondary value. It is not thus that the great epic poets awaken our enthusiasm and inspire our fancies.

Any thing extravagant, over-wrought, or sickly —any thing which cannot carry with it our full momentary belief, corrupts the mind of the reader, and will soon be rejected for more wholesome food. That sort of romance which is incredible conveys neither instruction nor rational pleasure. These are the inventions which bring a bad fame upon the imaginative faculty, and make cold phi-

losophers and moralists, who cannot distinguish, repudiate all poetry, as well as what falsely so calls itself. What is it that drives authors to these artifices? Poverty of real strength; and partly, perhaps, the craving call of the bad taste of the multitude.

Many will contend that we must judge of the facility or difficulty of the execution of a work by the frequency or infrequency of the production. But other circumstances concur to bring forth or check these performances.

There are probably few authors of any length of existence, who do not see too late how much time they have thrown away; and how much better they might have regulated their labours, and chosen their subjects. They discover too late where their strength lay, and what they could have done with the most benefit to themselves and others. They dare not at first rely on what their own internal movements prompt, but are deterred by fashion, bad taste, or insidious advice. They are discouraged from what they could do well; and therefore what they do, is done carelessly and unwillingly.

I had much seeming leisure in the years spent at Denton for any great work I might have imposed on myself; but my mind was distracted, and therefore could pursue nothing which had not high excitement: but excitement cannot in its nature be permanent, and therefore I could do

nothing which required a regular perseverance of labour. Whatever I did was fitful and transitory, and required the stimulus of variety. I often worked to exhaustion while the fit was on; then came on ennui and disgust.

I spent the autumn of 1804 and 1805 at Sandgate, and enjoyed the sea-breezes of a southern coast. One morning, during the equinox, in a boat-expedition off Dungeness to view the fleet, we were nearly lost in a terrible storm, which wrecked several small vessels. As the hunting season came on, the foxhounds drew me among the wild and beautiful hills of Beachborough; and I never enjoyed the cheering exercise with so much zest. There is no part of Kent more beautiful than the country at the back of Sandgate. It is varied with hills, valleys, and woods, almost close to the sea, and runs back to a wild country nearly ten miles inwards, and along the coast eastward as far as Dover. It is thinly inhabited by gentry; of whom the chief are Mr. Brockman, of Beachborough; Mr. Deedes, of Sandling; Lord Rokeby, at Horton; and Mr. Papillon, of Acryse. At this time there was a large camp under Sir John Moore at Shornecliffe, which enlivened the scene; and one morning we heard sounds at a distance, which turned out to have been at the time of the battle of Trafalgar, and of which we therefore afterwards supposed them to have been the dying echoes. At any rate there was some-

thing very singular and awful, which we remarked at the moment, as we were roving along on the beach, our feet touching the rolling tide.

These two autumns are among what have impressed themselves upon my memory with singular force. I love the sea, and breathe more freely on its shores, or when carried along on its buoyant surface. My mind was active and imaginative at that crisis; the weather was serene and beautiful; my health was vigorous; and the exercise of hunting gave a flowing current to my blood. Sandgate had then but few lodging-houses, and I did not like it the less for the paucity of its visiters or inhabitants. Sir John Shaw had a small marine villa on the beach, but I was very slightly acquainted with him. Mrs. Brockman, the daughter of Dr. Tatton, and whose mother was a daughter of Dean Lynch, was my relation; but I had seen very little of her since she married. She is lately deceased. I had no alliance either with Mr. Deedes or Mr. Papillon, though I had known them both from my boyhood; they were both very remote from my cast of pursuits.

O! if these days could return, when hope was not extinct, or the career of literary and political ambition not entirely closed upon me! I was then in my forty-second or forty-third year, and mighty things might still have been done. Now, if a grand scheme crosses me, I recollect that no time for the execution remains. I have outlived

the age of my father and my uncle, but not of my mother, who reached eighty-one years and nearly three months, and her mother survived to seventy-eight. This my maternal grandmother was a daughter of Sir Francis Head, Bart., whose mother was daughter and heiress of the celebrated Sir G. Ent, president of the College of Physicians, and the pupil, friend, and biographer of Dr. W. Harvey. Mrs. Egerton was an excellent woman: she survived her husband forty years.

Sometimes we returned for an evening or two from Sandgate to Denton, which was only eight miles distant, and we found the air thus inland sensibly more cold and sharp; and while we could sit by the sea-side till nine o'clock without chills, it was here not pleasant in the open air beyond seven, and even fires were often requisite. Dr. Harvey called Folkstone, his native town, the Montpelier of England. Folkstone is now a place of no trade but smuggling; yet in the reign of Queen Elizabeth or James I., the Dixwells, afterwards baronets of Broome, in Barham, made a large fortune there, probably by illicit traffic. In less than a century the Bouveries won away from them a fine estate which they had realized round that town; and then, by that and the large gains of the silk trade, bought a peerage fifty years afterwards of one of the mistresses of Geo. II. (as Coxe says, and as common report asserts.) The Dixwells ended in the second baronet, whose

heiress married the Oxendens, now of Broome. The Oxendens became considerable in the person of Sir George Oxenden (the grandfather of the present baronet), who was a friend of Walpole, and many years a Lord of the Admiralty in the time of that minister, and married the co-heiress of the Danch's of Berkshire. His son Sir Henry also married a co-heiress, a Chudleigh, of Devonshire. The Danch's were well connected, especially with the Hungerfords, from whom they derived some noble blood.—(See Sir Richard Hoare's "Hungerfordiana," and Edgeworth's "Memoirs," and Noble's "Cromwell.") Sir George Oxenden was a wit, and a writer of smart epigrams. He lived to more than eighty years of age—latterly in great retirement, at his paternal mansion of Deane, in Wingham. Scandal called George, the third Earl of Orford, his son; and he had generally the reputation of a gay man of the world—free in his habits, and indulgent to his pleasures. I remember his widow—a fine-looking old woman, with courteous manners and a venerable aspect. His son Sir Henry had, when young, been attached to the court of Frederick Prince of Wales. He had an estate of about 4 or £5000 a year, and lived very handsomely in the proper style of the higher order of old country gentlemen. No one lived so handsomely in the neighbourhood, except Lord Guildford, who only came down to Waldershare for two or three

months. The truth is, that the landed estates of the Kentish gentry are not in general large, to whatever cause it may be owing; and the farmers are luxurious, and commonly pay low rents, while labourers' wages are high, and poor-rates burdensome. During the high price of agricultural produce the farmers purchased many of the lands they occupied at enormous sums, but almost always by borrowed money,—and a large portion of them are now ruined. In those days every shopkeeper desired to turn farmer; and generally when he began to cultivate, did it with spirit, and often with success.

CHAPTER VII.

Talk of country squires—Offence taken at a novel of the author's —One character cancelled, but well merited—Claim to Chandos barony raised envy—Author's unfitness to be popular with the squirearchy—Kent has few peers among its residents—Lord Guildford and Lord Rokeby—Notice of some commoners—Sir Horace Mann, Sir Edward Hales—Strangers represented most of the cities and boroughs in parliament—Character of late Sir Edward Knatchbull, M.P. for Kent—Fox-hunters—Author's edition of Philips's "Theatrum Poetarum"—The author a bad visiter—Minutiæ of character always subjects of curiosity—Comparison of an author's writings with his personal disposition and habits—Rousseau and Byron—Tendency to excess in the great qualities of the mind—Mankind commonly bad at bottom—We like to see mankind in *déshabille*—Character of great poets, such as Dante, &c. conformable to their writings—Desire to know the characters of our great living poets—Byron's "Autobiography"—Obscure persons come now into public obituaries—Every one has his depreciators—Individuals dare not pronounce on genius without the public sanction—The multitude want due powers of observation—Necessity forces the demand and appreciation of talent for public affairs—Cast of character among gentry of a province, imposed by some leader of weight—Kent once produced eminent men, both in the reign of the Tudors and Stuarts—Instances—Character of the Kentish gentry a century ago—High luck of a small house in the cathedral precincts of Canterbury—Yorke family of Dover—Mrs. Macauley—Alderman Sawbridge—Lord Holland's marine villa at Sandgate—Gray's severe lines on it—Escape from Kent to the world at large —Sundry literary characters from 1720 to 1765—First part of George the Third's reign—Character of the "Annual Register"—Of the "Biographia Britannica"—Author's early fondness for bio-

graphy—His preference of books even in boyhood to the sports of the field—Age at which he first saw London—Deaths of some near relations— Verses containing reflections on the early clouds which gathered upon his youthful happiness.

I NEVER could bear the talk of country squires; and as they suspected this, my society was a wet sheet upon them. They never forgave me the allusions they thought they perceived in my novel of "Arthur Fitzalbini." They were very foolishly sensitive, for no one would have understood them if they had not owned that the cap fitted. There was only one character that came very close, and that page was cancelled, at the earnest entreaty of a relation of my own, before publication. I had had just reason for the ridicule it cast, by an act of mean perfidy towards me of such a malignant kind, as would seem scarce credible from a man of birth and fortune. But the leading passion of that man and of his family was jealousy of being elbowed by neighbours, and the indulgence of every sort of trick to depreciate their property, and injure the estimation in which they were held. The claim to the barony of Chandos was poison to our country neighbours, which turned them sick, and they joined in clans to depress and calumniate us.

I will admit that my own manners were not easy or conciliatory. I was apt to see a little too much in a look or a tone; and the knowledge that whatever I said or did would be misinter-

preted, made me suspicious and embarrassed. I could not talk of sheep or bullocks; examine a horse's mouth, or discuss his points. I could not tell what wind would give a good-scenting day; nor what course the fox would probably take, when he broke cover. If I attempted a joke, no one felt it; and if I made an observation, every one stared. That happy nonchalance and reckless raillery, which make such agreeable companions, were beyond my reach. I dared not mention a book, or enter into a political argument: if I did, a cant phrase or two of some jolly joker of the company soon put an end to it. If I mentioned some public man, who I thought had risen beyond his merits, there was an instant union of sarcasm, as if I spoke from prejudice and passion.

The higher classes of aristocratical commoners have commonly some intellectual man among them, who gives a tone to the rest: it was not so in East Kent; they were all of the character and temperament of the squirearchy. When Lord Guildford came down, he was courteous to all, and of course disdained to mingle in these petty clanships. Old Lord Rokeby also lived independent, magnanimous, and high-minded, and mingled with none of these pettitesses of society. Sir Horace Mann opened his house for about a month in the year, with cricketings and balls; but he was a wild, fickle, rattling man, who made no impression. Sir Edward Hales (a Catholic,—of a some-

what historical family,) never mingled with the neighbourhood. I need not mention names never heard of on the London side of Rochester bridge. Strangers came down to represent in parliament Dover, Sandwich, Hythe, and Romney, and often Canterbury itself. Sir Edward Knatchbull was a fox-hunter, but a man of a direct and manly character, and of useful bodily activity in county business. He represented the county in many parliaments, and died 1819, aged sixty. I was always on good terms with him, and found him open and friendly; but he resided near Ashford, too distant from the neighbourhood of Barham Downs. It would be idle to give him the character of talent or a polished mind.

Whenever men are frank and cordial, they set me free, however adverse their turn may be to my own. But there is a rude, artificial sort of freedom, which is as repressive as real cordiality is attractive and encouraging. Let no one suppose that this mutual coldness arose from the antipathy created by the offence taken at "Fitz-Albini:" it had been always the same from my age of eighteen. I never mixed easily with this class of book-hating squires; and I suppose that they attributed my reserve to a contempt for them. My younger brother was of a different turn:—he mingled freely and cordially with them all. He was a sportsman, and knew all their language, and how to meet their jests.

When I printed at a Canterbury press a new edition of Edward Philips's "Theatrum Poetarum" about 1800, only one copy was sold at Canterbury, and that was bought by Lord Rokeby. It is true that the volume was little more than a compilation, and the additions were principally drawn from Warton's "History of English Poetry;" but the literary information was useful, and, detached from the antiquarian matter in which Warton had involved it, which was too dry for common readers, it was a book which it might be supposed that persons of liberal education would have found amusing. The public in general thought so, for the impression was soon sold, and the volume is still held in esteem. Let it be recollected, that here was a cathedral church with a city full of clergy, and a neighbourhood thickly inhabited by persons who had enjoyed a college education.

From my arrival at manhood, I have always been a bad visiter. I could not bear the ceremoniousness of intruding on any one unasked; and I had an excess of natural shyness, which has never yet been overcome. I have been very apt therefore not to return calls; an omission which has made me many bitter and relentless enemies.

It may be said, that these confessions are trifles which instruct nobody, and concern nobody. Such is not the opinion of many enlightened sages: they think that the peculiarities of manners, as well as the precise traits of mind, even of the

most obscure beings, are instructive information to those who study the various intellectual conformations of human nature. Addison in an introductory letter of the "Spectator," speaks of this curiosity as inherent in man's existence. I never took up a book which I could read, without wishing to know the character and history of the author. But what is it to tell the facts, that he was born, married or lived single, and died? What is common to all, can convey no information. We desire to know an author's feelings, his temper, his disposition, his modes of thinking, and his habits;—nay, even his person, his voice, and his mode of expressing himself; the society in which he has lived, and the images and lessons which attended upon his cradle. How has he lived and acted, who takes upon himself to teach others? He pens noble thoughts:—does he feel and think nobly? He talks of the love of retirement:—is he strong enough to love solitude? He affects to despise the world:—does he really fly from it? Is he gay while he pretends to be melancholy? Is he a matter-of-fact man, while he represents himself to be visionary? Is he absorbed in selfish craft, while he assumes to be frank and self-forgetful? Does he delight in the artificial customs of society, while he boasts of his passionate and engrossing love of the charms of nature? Then his writings are empty words, which we discard with disgust.

I have seen men who have written sentimentally, but when they came into society dealt in nothing but unfeeling and heartless raillery: these men put on a mask when they write; and whoever examines their literary productions merely, will find proofs of it in every passage. Neither Rousseau nor Byron could have written as they did unless they had been enthusiasts; yet it was a striking weakness of Byron, that he was ashamed of his enthusiasm.

In all the great qualities of the mind, there is a tendency to excess; and experience alone can show the nice line of boundaries. Thus it is that biography is nothing, unless it aids to the knowledge of these boundaries. Human nature might be very good, and sometimes is so; but in general it is very bad. They who guide their outward manners and actions by principle and rule, may seem very good members of society; but I had rather trust to inborn goodness of disposition: the former are often secretly corrupt and heartless. I once heard a man, whom I had thought virtuous and kind-bosomed at bottom, secretly mutter to himself when he supposed I was not near him, and I trusted him no more: from that day I believed him to be full of spite and spleen in the hidden recesses of his being.

We are desirous to see men's minds when not dressed for company, in the same way as a coxcomb's person is made up by the tailor, or a lady's

shape by the milliner. If he be an author, we can learn nothing with certainty from his mere compositions, uncompared with his personal character and private nature; unless indeed there be that internal proof of sincerity, which very few have the force to throw into their writings. But the very greatest poets never put a character into their works distinct from their own: witness Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, Milton, and Byron.

Let us enquire closely of ourselves what curiosity we should wish to have gratified:—should we not delight to have the frank story of the lives and feelings of Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge, Campbell, Rogers, Moore, and Wilson, related by themselves? With whom they lived early; how their bent took a decided course; their likes and dislikes; their difficulties and obstacles; their tastes; their passions; the rocks they are conscious of having split upon; their regrets; their complacencies, and their self-justifications? Byron's "Autobiography," which Moore put into the fire, is said to have been coarsely written; and therefore I do not regret it: his own poems are his best biography.

I am fully aware of the sarcastic observations to which the last paragraph exposes me. "Admit such a curiosity to exist with regard to the names you have enumerated, does it therefore apply to such a man as yourself?" The knowledge of human nature is valuable even when exhibited in the

mental movements of obscure men. This is the only reply I shall make. The names of obscure men now find their way into public obituaries; and if I am to be spoken of, let me be "spoken of as I am," and have "naught set down in malice." Burke thought that he could live down calumny. I rarely differ from that great and wise man's opinions: on this I think he had a false reliance, and was mistaken; a calumny uncontradicted will be taken for a truth.

I suppose that every one has his depreciators, instigated by prejudice, private passion, rivalry, envy, jealousy, and malice; and that we should not live a day, if the ill-will of others could kill us. But, altogether, spite wears itself out, and defeats its own end. There must be some men distinguished above the rest, in defiance of calumny; and so, in mere wearisomeness of constant detraction, the public admit a few within the lines of fame, or at least of approval. But it is genius only which can hold its place; and genius is not easily conceded.

We may define genius with sufficient preciseness; but individuals will not agree to its application, unless under the sanction of the public voice; and genius is rarely acknowledged by those who have been familiar wilh it from childhood. It is said that "a prophet is not honoured in his own country;"—he must go a-field. Enlarged society, and a wide arena, are necessary.

Imagination may enable us to know mankind in the abstract; the just application of the knowledge depends upon experience and practice. The prejudices of our childhood will stick to particular objects. I have never met with a person who entirely freed himself from certain impressions of his childhood.

The mass of mankind have not the capacity of deep and extended observation: they either take things as they are taught them, or their own opinions are narrow and superficial: they are busied about little matters of their own individual interests, and the rest either lies light upon them, or is entirely neglected. "Really," they cry, "I have not thought much about these things, they are not my concern." "Well, but A. says so and so."—"Oh, yes; but he is a wild man, whose opinions I little regard: he has no solid sense; look how he manages his own affairs!" They think that a man lives for himself, and for himself alone.

Wisdom is the result of leisure long employed with honesty and skill by great talents and acute moral sensibility. The love of contemplation is inherent in such a mind and disposition. It cannot bear to walk in the dark, when it has the power of clearing away mists: it seeks the light, and obtains it, and basks in it. As the mingled shades of twilight disperse, the flying vapours open creation in all its brilliance. But

these are airy dreams, which the selfish, the unintellectual, and the stupid, regard as idle flights of feverish imaginations. They ask what lesson of practical use we are taught by them, and how they instruct us to get on in the world.

In the sphere of higher society,—among those whose intellect must guide human affairs,—there is a demand for the genius and talents which see far and wide,—into which individual interests, and the petty management which gives selfish advantages at the expense of others, do not enter. These great mental gifts are properly appreciated, and make their way. Thus no man of genius, or superiority of mind, should ever place himself in a narrow neighbourhood. He would there indeed have to "cut blocks with a razor," when a blunt hatchet would better answer his purpose.

At a particular age a peculiar cast of character prevails among the gentry of a particular province. We may not always be able to account for it: it is probably a fashion given by some one of leading rank and wealth. Kent once produced some very eminent men: witness Sir Thomas Wyat, Lord Buckhurst, Sir Philip Sidney, and Sir Francis Walsingham. In the time of Charles I. the leading gentry were men of celebrity; such as Sir Dudley Digges, Sir Edwin Sandys, Sir Roger Twysden, editor of the "Decem Scriptores," and Sir Edward Dering: this of course gave the bent to the minor gentry. One of the Knatchbulls, in

the next reign, was an author, and in rather a singular department for a country baronet — it was in divinity. I do not remember ever to have heard of a Honywood having written a book. The Furneses of Waldershare raised themselves to great riches at once, by smuggling, at Sandwich, in the reign of William and Mary, but expired in the next generation, enriching Lord Guildford, Sir Edward Dering, and the third Lord Bolinbroke. We had rarely much nobility. The second Lord Cowper, son of the Chancellor, was popular at the Moat, by his support of a pack of fox-hounds, and his love of the sports of the field; and I believe that the Lords Rockingham were well esteemed at Lee's Court, near Feversham; but the squires ruled the day. Mr. Barrett, of Lee, was a man of *virtù*, and a collector; he died 1758: Sir James Gray, of Dennehill, was a diplomatist; and Mr. Robinson, afterwards Lord Rokeby, shut himself up, when he quitted parliament, in his own independence of mind and habits, at Horton, near Hythe. Old John Lewis pursued his own antiquarianism at Margate,—then a little fishing town,—far from all these merry spirits of the field; while Dr. Brook Taylor indulged his philosophical genius at Bifrons. Sir Thomas Palmer of Wingham indulged himself, as Pope says, in "wedding the whole personæ dramatis."*

* To Palmer's bed no actress comes amiss,
He weds the whole personæ dramatis.

At the same time Sir John Hales shut himself up in his house of St. Stephen's, living like old Elwes, with an immense estate, on a crust, and letting his only son die in a prison. Old Dr. Nicholas Carter, the father of the poetess, was writing theological tracts against his neighbour, the orthodox Randolph, and bandying Latin epigrams with Sir George Oxenden, of Deane; and the poetess herself was writing odes upon wisdom, corresponding with Archbishop Secker, and translating Epictetus; while Nicholas Hardinge was visiting the Grays, and writing Denhilliads. Then the boy Thurlow was leading a life of torment to his master, Talbot, by his tricks and drolleries at Canterbury school; and laying the foundation of his own future greatness, by the ascendancy of his temper, and the daring directness of his talents. There from a small house opposite the west door of the cathedral issued a Countess of Salisbury; and a fate of future greatness was still hovering over the same humble tenement, destined to be the birthplace of the late most learned and excellent Chief Justice of England. From another town in the same district the noble and illustrious house of Yorke had already issued to adorn the woolsack, and enlighten the legislation of the kingdom. At the same time Mrs. Macauley from Ollantigh was nursing her radical politics, and collecting materials for her furious "History," while her brother Sawbridge was dreaming of civic

honours and John Wilkes. Such was East Kent from about 1720 to 1765. Not long after, Lord Holland began to erect his marine villa at Kingsgate, near Margate, for which see Gray's vigorous and truly poetical lines:—

> In this congenial spot he fix'd his choice:
> Earl Goodwin trembled for his neighbouring sand.
> Here sea-mews scream, and cormorants rejoice;
> And mariners, though shipwreck'd, fear to land.

But it is pleasant to escape from provincial limits to the world at large. For the first part of this time Pope and Bolinbroke held dominion over the public mind; then Gray, Johnson, Hume, Chesterfield, Robertson, Warburton, Lowth, Burke, Lord Chatham, Fielding, Richardson, the Wartons, Akenside, Young, Lyttelton, Horace Walpole, Pulteney, Colman, Mason, Soame Jenyns, Garrick, &c. The greatest of all these was, in my opinion, Burke. All these characters are too well known for discussion. Have they been succeeded by others superior to them? The grave sanctifies merits; and we are apt to praise, without reserve, when envy and jealousy, and prejudice have ceased. We have none in the same walk as Gray and Collins; but they have splendors of another kind. None has arisen who has any chance of eclipsing Burke: he is the only author who has written politics of which the interest has not ceased with the crisis:—in Burke's case the interest has not even lessened.

The first twenty years of George the Third's reign were not brilliant in literature; nor in statesmen, except Lord Chatham and Burke. The Butes, Grenvilles, Rockinghams, Fitzroys, were all of a class of mediocrity. The lawyers were not eminent, except Charles Yorke; unless, indeed, we add the name of Blackstone. Goldsmith rose at this time; but he has been commended beyond his merits: and Hawkesworth was once fashionable, but is now forgotten. He was a dry, artificial writer, with no originality of mind. There are scarcely any good papers in the "Adventurer," except the critical ones of Joseph Warton. At this time the public journals were written with a woeful deficiency of taste and talent. The "Annual Register" was designed by Burke, and was a useful compilation; but, compared with the more piquant mode of writing, appears dull. It was bad judgment to select two or three books of the year,—not always the best,—and give no account of any other. Thus the selected poetry was commonly mediocre and uninteresting.

The great work of the "Biographia Britannica" had been principally executed in the former reign. It was compiled with great labour, and full of copious and exact details; but commonly dull, without force of character, and without adequate discrimination. The plan, which is that of Bayle is not altogether the best. The notes make a perpetual impediment to reading the narrative con-

secutively, and render it more fit to be consulted as a dictionary than as a work of amusement. The form is like Bayle's, but not the spirit. Scarce any article rises above mere compilation.

It seems ungrateful to speak thus; for from this work I began at eight or nine years old to contract my passion for biography. I had the work constantly in my hands during the holidays, which I almost invariably spent at home. The volumes always lay in one of the windows of the common parlour at Wootton; and how often have I rejoiced, when the rain and snow came, to keep me by the winter fireside, instead of mounting my pony, to follow all the morning my uncle's harriers! and when I was out, how I counted the hours till I could return to my beloved books! The moment dinner was over I drew my chair round to the fire, and one of these large volumes was opened upon my knees. I grew peevish if any one interrupted me; and was so totally absorbed in myself, that I was lost to all that was passing around me. At that time I was much more delighted with this work than with all the books of poetry that offered themselves to me. With me they set imagination at work, instead of merely loading my memory. I was not an unapt scholar, but was rather pleased with matter than words; and have, from the time I grew up, been very impatient at learning languages.

I never saw London till I was sixteen years

old; nor indeed ever went out of Kent. My father's health was bad, and he lived entirely in the country: his family was large; and, though he lived plentifully, he lived plainly and unostentatiously. Few country gentlemen then went much to London, unless they were in parliament; and my father had on his own side no near relation except his brother. My godmother, Mrs. Campbell Hamilton, who was first-cousin to my grandmother, Mrs. Egerton, died in Sackville Street, Piccadilly, in 1770. Cheshire was too far off to visit my godfather, Samuel Egerton, at Tatton; whom however I remember paying us a visit at Wootton, when I was a child. My mother's uncle, Sir John Head, Prebendary and Archdeacon, died in 1769, having succeeded his brother in the baronetage only a few months before.

I had no sorrow in my boyish days:
Then all was fair to me; prosperity,
And virtue, and content, were in my house.
But ere my four-and-twentieth year arrived
Troubles began to gather in the sky,
And black and blacker grew, till loaded storms
Burst on my head, and then my palsied powers
Fell into feebleness and sad despondence,
And all the glowing dreams of youthful hope
Evanish'd like the lightning's transient blaze.
In boyhood none I saw but friends around me:
Dark mines were hid not under hollow ground;
But safe I trod upon the fragrant grass,
And wander'd thro' the fields and woods secure;
And stepp'd on leaves, and thro' the moonlight gleam

Came joyous home, of morning's dawn impatient,
Again my rural sports to follow, and
To bend the twig, and weave the shady bower.
Now scowls I met, and inward to my heart
Were driv'n its soft or fiery energies.
I pined, and scarce could lift my tearful eye,
And envied the most dull, and those who knew
Scarcely a wish of intellectual joy.—
Then the dear spot of my nativity
Seem'd Paradise;—but there I came no more.
Others, of hearts estranged, dominion held,
And Fate seem'd then to seal my doom in darkness.
Thus on I struggled thro' the mantling clouds;
And when I caught a ray, it only show'd
The black more frightful, and then fled again.

CHAPTER VIII.

Are the difficulties of life inevitable?—Crooked roads the most prosperous—There may be an excess of straightforwardness—Who make fortunes—Artifice must always be on the watch—Men succeed without good sense—Wisdom of keeping aloof from society, and amusing oneself innocently—The desire to obtain distinction implanted in us—Author's wish of a seat in Parliament—His final success, and enjoyment of it—A certain conformity to the world's usages necessary—One must not lose one's caste—Young heads cannot resist worldly greatness—Excitement from the memory of one's ancestors—Campagne at Geneva—Author's acquired disregard of capricious opinions as to his writings—Tests of good writing—Charlatanism—Compilers—Desire to communicate our thoughts—Bad taste—The elements of nature open to all—Many hate reading—They only are affected by material presences—Author's addiction to spiritualities—His earliest recollections—Historical notices of Wootton—Aged rectors of Denton—How far such notices are relevant—Author's early studies—Enthusiasm—What degree of merit will last—Positive merit rare—Mason's Life of Gray—Bonstetten's account of Gray—Gray's fastidiousness and indolence blamed.

Are the difficulties of life of a man's own creating, or may they not arise from fate and inevitable circumstances? What is called prudence is often nothing more than mean, dishonest, and wicked cunning. I would rather not succeed than succeed by such ways. I am fully aware that

the crooked and secret road is the most prosperous. There is little fair fighting; it is all done by ambush and mines. The enemy's army is made up of miners, sappers, and tirailleurs. There may, however, be an openness beyond necessity; and I believe that I have fallen into that error. One is not bound to lay bare one's breast merely to enable an assassin to plunge a dagger into it with the greater ease. Reserve is seldom amiable; but some portion of it is necessary.

Who are the people that make fortunes? The crafty and the selfish, at the expense of wrong to others. All the affairs of the world are managed by artifice and intrigue. These are carried into literature, which never succeeds without much contrivance and adroitness of address. A publisher cannot get off a book by the mere force of its merit. Tricks wear out, but then new ones are discovered. Yet he who lives by artifice must be wretched: he must always be on the watch, and have no confidence in any thing around him: as he deceives others, so he must always be fearful of being deceived.

But though cunning advances men in worldly prosperity, want of what is called good sense does not generally bring on misfortune. If it did, how many should we see the victims of misfortune who are not so! We meet every day numerous people, weak in this respect, who yet pursue an even, calm, and unobstructed tenor of life. We

must not therefore attribute the crosses and injuries inflicted on genius to what is vulgarly denominated imprudence or defect of common sense.

It is a miserable incident to human life that plain dealing and straightforward conduct should meet with such ill returns, and that the busy parts of mankind should be all employed in playing games of duplicity and deception. But will any one of sagacity and experience deny the fact? The wise plan would seem to me, at this too late period of my life, to be, in cases of the most humble competence, to keep aloof from all the paths of human contest or rivalry, and to pass one's days in retirement, despising show and vanity and notice, and seeking to while away the time by any innocent and self-dependent amusement.

We seek distinction by an inherent propensity; but it is of no worth if obtained; and what obstacles are in the way of obtaining it! I regret that I ever had any ambition, literary or political; but, unfortunately, one of my early desires was to obtain a seat in Parliament, and I never succeeded till I was on the verge of fifty—viz. Oct. 1812. Then I was successful in a contested election for Maidstone, and sat six busy years, till the dissolution in June, 1818. But I was not altogether unhappy during the discharge of that function, though I had innumerable sorrows and wrongs to distract me, which enfeebled and bound in chains any small faculties I might otherwise have dis-

played. I took an active part in the poor laws and the copyright bill.

It is true, that if one does not conform to the world in certain usages and appearances, he is in danger of losing his caste; and it is not easy to reconcile oneself to associate with a caste below one, because manners, expression, sentiments, habits, are at variance with it. Otherwise, one might be happy in the humblest cottage, and with the most rude conveniences. Perhaps our pride cannot be so entirely subdued as to see, unmoved, the great ones of the earth trail by us as if they would roll us recklessly in the dust.

All these impediments and evils oppose that magnanimity of mind which would set us above the wretched minions of the world. But still the heart and head would be lifted up to such a tone, if in youth we could have the wisdom of age. Alas! this "*if*" supposes an impossibility. Mists and delusions always play before the youthful sight, and passion overrules reason. There is a dazzle in worldly greatness which no young mind or heart can resist. I always, from a child, loved to get out of its way, and bury myself in the woods—"When I could not conquer, I learned to fly:" I sincerely and deeply wish I had never come back again out of those woods. But I used to hear from my earliest infancy of the rise and grandeur of my ancestor, Lord Chancellor Egerton, and of my royal blood. Then, again, I heard

of Lord Chancellor Hardwicke, who was my father's relation, and of whose education I have heard that my grandfather had the care. The portrait of Chancellor Egerton, in his official robes, hung by the bedside in which I was born, and seemed with his grave countenance to look solemnly upon me. The engraved portrait of the other Chancellor always hung over the fireside of my uncle's justice-room. The Gibbon arms were there quartered with the Yorke *saltier*,* and reminded me of the relationship, for I was always observant of heraldic symbols. I have no doubt that these things made an impression on my mind, which operated strongly on my future fate.

I now sit at the window of my humble campagne at Geneva, catching a glimpse of the noble lake, and defy or forget a world which once troubled me, and whose spite and other evil passions I once was not strong enough to overcome. Now they pass by me unheeded; they rattle along the road, but do not disturb my calm; and I live in the company of departed poets, and sublime and tender moralists. Many of my feelings have been anticipated by Cowley in his admirable prose-essays, which are models of thought, sentiment, and language. Every thing is at the mercy of mind: if we think rightly, we are capable of

* I suppose the heralds added the *torteaux* on the centre of the *saltier*.

enjoyment under almost any adversity or deprivation. Calumny and detraction may rage; but in retirement we hear it not. There is a noble stanza in Thomson's "Castle of Indolence," beginning,

I care not, Fortune, what you me deny!

With regard to what I have written, or may yet write, I shall no more torment myself as to the approval, or censure, or cavils of the critics and the public. I know that I write with innocent intentions, and with a desire to develope the truth. I at least employ and amuse myself innocently, and am not so shaken as I used to be by capricious or ill-designed judgments, while I am prepared for unfeeling neglect. If it could be proved that what one writes is no index to what he thinks and feels, then it would be of little value and no interest; but I am confident that such delusive writers always betray themselves. Sincerity has always a breath and spirit of its own.

Then it must be examined what is intrinsically the value of that which is written. Are the observations, reasonings, or feelings, just? Is there any novelty or force in them; or are they mere trite truisms? If the latter, they will immediately find their way into waste, and soon bring about the repression of future impertinences. Some pretend that we have already authors more than enough, and that nothing more requires to be elu-

cidated. Are those who make such assertions worthy of an answer? If they could by their wishes or efforts repress intellectual produce they would do so, were not twenty books in existence.

At all times questions are arising, which can only be properly and deliberately examined when embodied and fixed in language, which exhibits them in a precise form, so that they may be sifted without the possibility of evasion on the part of him who advances them. *Litera scripta manet.* Innumerable plausible talkers are to be found, who, if their words were taken down, would appear very foolish. They who can say nothing which has not been said before, either in matter or in manner, had better, perhaps, keep their lucubrations to themselves. It may be even then instructive to use the pen for the purpose of improving their own minds, and employing themselves in an innocent occupation.

Strange things sometimes engage for a moment the public attention, but never long. Charlatanisms in a little while blow themselves up. An incredible quantity of nonsense is vomited from the press, which soon dies and is turned into dust, or lines trunks, and wraps up the goods of pastry-cooks. This, perhaps, is a main cause of the scarcity of the works of old forgotten verse-writers. Yet, when fashion changes, secondary poets of some genius may still fall into oblivion.

We come then to compilers: of what use are

they?—They are intellectual labourers, working at the direction of others, or upon other men's capital. But the public pays little respect to such works, unless they be done by those who are capable of better things, and who reflect a fame upon them.

The charm of authorship cannot be defined: when it is well done, it is a passion, and not a subject of reason and calculation. They who have a persuasion that their secret thoughts and feelings will do them honour, love to communicate them. Of many poets and eloquent authors we should not have the most remote idea of the richness of their minds, were it not for the productions of their pens: they do not give the least appearance of it in their looks, or indications of it in their conversations.

Providence has implanted a desire in us of reconcilement to ourselves, which, though it often employs delusions, often keeps us within the line of active duty. We meditate on the part we are fulfilling, and consider how far we make ourselves worthy of our being here. Thus, he who has a literary bent examines himself how far he is justified in so spending his time. No one will admit to himself that he is a cipher in society. But as far as literature is concerned, the various lights and shades of merit and demerit are open to endless diversity of opinion. Producers will claim the priority of usefulness over mere consumers,—

that is, authors over those who are only readers. But the *scribendi cacoethes* is often wasted in empty trifles.

Authors almost as often fail, perhaps, from bad taste, bad passions, and bad examples, as from inability. They want noble feelings and noble purposes; they are mercenary and selfish. They are endeavouring therefore to propagate narrow notions, and produce partial effects. The result is, that if they operate at all, they operate only for a moment, and then are thrown aside as dead matter. What is made for the book-market cannot undertake to lead the public mind—it must follow it. But the public mind varies like a weather-cock, and varies for the purpose of novelty and surprise.

I do not think mechanical or manufacturing writers worthy much esteem; they rather tend to bring literature into contempt. Native talent and laborious attainments, honestly exerted, are requisite. Mere borrowings, disguised or not, only withdraw the public from the support of those who originate, and who are necessary for the continued supply of mental food. Add to this, that the borrower often misapplies, and makes that which was true in the original, false in the blundering repetition.

But then how many are condemned to be useless ciphers, though they are not willing to think so of themselves; I mean useless to society at

large: they may, if they will, always perform some service in a narrow sphere, and they may enjoy themselves in an humble and virtuous content. The air, the sun, and the skies, are as open to them as to the most nobly endowed; and almost all the genuine happiness of our being depends on these. The accursed passions sown into us by the fall of Adam alone blight it.

Though the love of reading is very common, the hatred of it is not less common. I suppose that many minds have no susceptible mirror on which images can be impressed by the medium of words, and no intellectual apprehensiveness by which opinions and sentiments can be livelily awakened: they therefore can be only interested by material presences. These are often quick in society, and in the bustle of actual scenery. For my part, I always loved the ideal better than the real. Reality never satisfied me; the imaginative commonly did so. The intense delight with which I read romances and fairy tales from the earliest age, is indescribable. My mother had a trunk full of them, and I almost got them by heart; not one of them did I omit to read over many times. My grandmother, Egerton, first taught me to read before I was four years old; but at that age I was a refractory scholar. At six I began to delight in books.

I remember a few incidents distinctly which occurred at the age of three years and a half—viz.

in May, 1766, and others still more livelily in the summer and autumn of 1767. The next thing which I distinctly recollect is the person and chariot of my uncle Head, which must have been in the summer or autumn of 1769, if not 1768; then the express which came down to announce the death of my godmother, Mrs. Campbell Hamilton, in 1770, to whom my father was executor; and a visit at Wootton by Mrs. Montagu, who was then staying with her brother, Mr. William Robinson, at Denton. I remember the christening of my youngest sister, in June, 1766, at which Gray the poet was present,* but whose person and presence I do not remember. I was then too young to be interested by the name or person of a poet; but I well remember that day my cries at the sting of a wasp, and my younger brother's blue hat and feather, at which I put myself in a passion. It was a bright day, and the sun flamed upon the windows of our nursery.

During those years I have a general remembrance of the aspect of every field and wood about Wootton, under the various lights and tints of the varying seasons; every tree, and hedge, and path—and the trees were magnificent there; and there was hill and valley, and abundance of underwood, richly interspersed. The house was old; the main part of it at least as ancient as the time

* See Gray's Letters of that date.

of Leonard and Thomas Digges,* and probably much older, but patched about, and of very moderate size. It had been much dilapidated in the infancy of my father and uncle, and I believe part pulled down. My father added two or three rooms. It stands close to the church, which is almost as near as a wing to the old front, formerly inclosed in a walled court. The grounds have been now laid open, with very doubtful advantage to the picturesqueness. Wootton stands on a high hill; Denton in the valley beneath it to the south. The Coppins held Wootton for a century after the Digges's parted with it. The second John Coppin married a Gibbon, the sister of Matthew, great-grandfather of the historian. He died in the time of Charles I.† At this time a father and son of the name of Lunn held the rectory of Denton for one hundred years, down to 1765; and the son had a brother and three sisters, all of whom survived to between eighty and ninety years of age.

If an author is entitled to say any thing of his early years, such little notices cannot be irrelevant to the subject. They must contribute to the colours of his mind, and, perhaps, to the direction of his pursuits. But they cannot supply the *mens*

* For Leonard and Thomas Digges, learned mathematicians, see "Biographia Britannica," and Wood's "Athenæ Oxon."

† See a notice of one of the Coppins in Bishop Kennet's "Register."

divinior itself, which will show itself, if sown by nature, in clay-built cottages and straw hedge-row huts, as in Burns and Bloomfield; and yet cannot be originated by castles, halls, and palaces —of which the riches of Baring could not supply a spark; nor the learning of Horsley, nor the science of Watson, when blazoned by the mitre, give a gleam.

At an early age, Buchanan's Latin poetry was a great and intimate favorite with me, and I got Milton's juvenile poems almost by heart. I generally carried these little volumes (the Elzevir of Buchanan) in my pocket. I read them on stiles, on banks, and under hedges, when the season allowed, as well as by the winter fire, when the weather kept me in-doors. From fourteen or fifteen I dreamed of authorship, and never afterwards gave up the ambition. Collins also was one of the earliest objects of my enthusiastic admiration.

Enthusiasm is an inseparable part of my nature. "Be calm," those around me used to say; "do things with more moderation; do not be so run away with; admire, if you will, but admire coolly; husband your energies; proceed gently, and you will sooner reach your end."—"Throw cold water on the boiling cauldron," I answered, "and see what you will gain by it. The heat will spend itself best in its own unobstructed way."

Who can hope that he can do any thing so well

that it will not be superseded by those who come after him? Dare he believe that his works will continue to be read when his successors will have all the advantages of novelty, as well as of the lights he has afforded them? If, for instance, one writes an article containing a critical memoir of some celebrated person, can a charm be given it which will be permanent, and may not be extracted and transferred? or is there a flow of words and association of ideas which will not bear to be mutilated or displaced?

Perhaps all fame is delusive and empty; but at any rate the literary fame is so, which is not built upon positive and unchangeable merit. Whatever is raised by accidental or adventitious circumstances can never be certain of continuance for a day. Lights are incessantly likely to spring up on every side to eclipse it, and any capricious breath may extinguish it. It is a house of cards, which a whisper may knock down. He who lives in it, and is anxious that it should not tumble over his head, must live in a state of tremor.

Then we come to the old question, what is positive merit? This can only be decided by the principles of truth and the rules of composition, which have been admitted to be the standard of all concurring ages. It is such as has stood the test of time, and is not the result of a momentary fashion, of which the essence is novelty, and an attempt to interest by false stimulants.

There are a few choice spirits born in every age, who are qualified to reach this positive merit. But experience proves that they are rarer than might be supposed; so many circumstances being necessary to concur to make an eminent author. It is however provided, that generally they who are fit for it should have an irrepressible desire to put forth their powers. There are, doubtless, a few exceptions, such as Gray, who wrote little, and did not love to write. But we do not know so much of his private feelings as we should wish, as we have little besides his letters to instruct us. He committed to paper no memorials of his own life; and the only one of his personal acquaintance who has left a life of him is Mason, whose biography is very barren: it is full of study, reserve, and affectation. I have conversed on the subject with Bonstetten, who knew him; but Bonstetten was then very old, and his memory began to fail; and he was himself very young and lively when he visited the poet; and being also a foreigner, did not enter into those deep observations which were necessary for the elucidation of this point. He seemed to think that Gray was little aware of his own celebrity, and said that he did not like to talk of his own writings. In short, Bonstetten, though himself a genius, very evidently had not penetrated Gray's character; but he admired his wonderful and various erudition, and amiable disposition and manners. It was, I

think, in 1769, that Bonstetten, who was then twenty-four years old, visited Gray at Cambridge. He died at Geneva, February, 1832, aged eighty-seven.

I have always expressed an opinion, and still continue to think, that Gray's fastidiousness was a great fault, or rather weakness. He had an aspiring, fiery, noble mind, inclining to indignation and scorn. Of whom then should he be afraid? He had a morbid dread of ridicule; but it is pusillanimous to dread the ridicule of folly and ignorance. His spirit was broken by the misfortunes of his childhood; but it was not so broken as to suppress the grandeur of ideas which produced the few sublime poems he has put forth: then why not oftener give the reins to his imagination, and thus

> Know his own worth, and glorify the lyre?

It would have been not only better for the public, but far happier for himself: he would have avoided that spleen, melancholy, and ennui, and those sleeping flames, smouldering within, which consumed him at the age of fifty-four. Then mark what vast and accurate erudition, what taste, what moral wisdom, what elegance, died with him, which, by the use of his pen, he might have left as a legacy to a grateful posterity!

CHAPTER IX.

Author's paternal grandfather—father—grandmother—Gibbon, the South-Sea director—Lord Chancellor Hardwicke—Sir William Ashburnham—Character of author's father—His uncle—Dr. Berkeley—Mrs. Berkeley—Mrs. Katherine Talbot—Dr. Heneage Dering—Dispute about Pope—Dr. Tanner—Bishop Horne—Jones of Pluckley and Nayland—Dr. Joseph Warton's "Essay on Pope"—Collins—Bowles and Byron—True poets think poetically in all their meditations—We are not fairly estimated by our personal acquaintance—Uninterrupted toil necessary to bring out powers—Hayley's novel, "The Old Maid"—Mrs. Elizabeth Carter—Southey's character of Hayley—Dr. Cyril Jackson—Hayley's character of Cowper—Cowper's gloom—Character of Mason—Poetical taste of that age—W. Combe, S. Jenyns, and Johnson—Boswell.

When my paternal grandfather died in July, 1712, aged thirty-two, my father was only six months old, and my uncle a year and quarter old. Their mother lived till 1738; viz. twenty-six years. She gave them both a liberal education, sending them, on leaving school, to Benet College, Cambridge, (whence the latter entered himself of the Middle Temple,) and where the father, being a younger brother, became a short time a Fellow. My grandfather left a competent landed estate to his eldest son; and my father, in addi-

tion to a younger son's moderate provision, left by my grandfather's will, had at his age of sixteen, in 1728, half the manor of Wootton, devised to him by his aunt Garrett, sister of the last Mr. Coppin. The other half came to my uncle by my grandfather's will.

My grandmother also brought a considerable property as the heiress of Edward Gibbon of West Cliff, whose nephew,* Edward Gibbon, the South-Sea director, was grandfather of the historian. The widow of the first Edward (his second wife) remarried Philip Yorke, and was mother of Lord Chancellor Hardwicke. She was herself a Gibbon, a cousin of her first husband. The chancellor was born at Dover, in 1690. He inherited from his father, and from his grandfather, Simon Yorke of Dover, merchant, a landed estate at Alkham, St. Margaret's, &c. in the neighbourhood of Dover, of many hundred acres, which still belongs to Lord Hardwicke.

Though my grandmother was first cousin to the South-Sea director, I believe that little communication subsisted between them. About twenty-one or twenty-two years after her death, his son and grandson, the historian, paid a visit to Woot-

* See the Will of Mrs. Deborah Bradford, of St. Andrew's, Holborn, widow, 1712; who sets out these relationships by her legacies. She was sister of Edward Gibbon, the father of Mrs. Brydges, and of Matthew Gibbon, father of the South-Sea director.

ton, and dined there.* The Gibbons had good property; for though Thomas Gibbon, the father of Edward and Matthew, had a large family by two wives, he made many additions to his patrimony by purchase; and I now possess two estates, for one of which he gave, in 1638, £3800; and for the other, in 1644, nearly £5000;—large sums in those days. Thomas, the eldest son, married the sister of Sir William Rooke, aunt of Sir George Rooke, the celebrated Admiral. There is a good portrait of Sir George Rooke at Lee Priory; one of the best of Sir Godfrey Kneller's hand.

My father's contemporary and friend at Benet College was, I think, Sir William Ashburnham, afterwards for many years Bishop of Chichester; of whom I forget the character he gave, but I believe that he thought well of him. My father was an acute observer;—a little stern, and not very lenient to imaginary pleasures. I remember once, when I was admiring Shenstone, his breaking out with an unexpected invective against him for his pecuniary carelessness, and wasting his property in ornamenting his grounds: but as he was a single man, without near relations, surely this, if a fault, was very venial. I suppose my father was in pain at the moment, which disturbed

* See the historian's letter to me, printed in the "Gentleman's Magazine," 1796, or 1797; and in the notes to the "Poem on the Lake of Geneva," 1831.

his temper; for it was the summer before his death. He died in November. His principal studies at college had been metaphysics and divinity. Both he and his brother retired very early to a country life; and my uncle became the most expert sportsman, as well as best magistrate, of the province—or at least of that part; and my father entirely devoted himself to county and family business. My uncle had the most lively understanding—my father the most solid. My uncle's manners were most popular; my father was most sought in grave affairs. My uncle had none of the cares of a family on his mind; my father was devoted to them. My father died rich: he had, besides his lands, between £20,000 and £30,000 ready money, and not a debt. He left seven younger children, whose portions were £3000 each, besides bequests of nearly £1000 each, which had been left them by collateral relations. A great deal was left at my mother's disposal, who survived him twenty-nine years—she having been sixteen years younger than my father. A more independent, honourable, virtuous, quiet, and hospitable life, than was led by my father, mother, and uncle, could no where be found: and it would have been happy if my father's agonizing disorder had left him any rest. They had the society and respect of a very large neighbourhood of gentry, who were of a cast far above those who immediately succeeded them.

One of the prebendaries of Canterbury was Dr. George Berkeley, son of the celebrated Irish bishop. He recommended to my father, as a remedy, the bishop's pamphlet on tar-water; but my father unfortunately took a quack medicine called "soap lees," — a medicine strong enough to kill a horse. Dr. Berkeley was an amiable man, but talkative and wild, with a very small portion of his father's genius. He had married a virago, the most garrulous, vain, foolish, presumptuous, and ill-tempered of women; by whom he had a son, George Moncke Berkeley, who mingled most of the absurdities of his parents, excepting that he was not so bad-tempered as his mother. He died at the age of between twenty and thirty; and his mother published a heavy quarto "Memoir," purporting to be an account of his life, but stuffed with every sort of nonsense and impertinence. Thus ended the descendants of the excellent and illustrious Bishop Berkeley, to whom Pope ascribed "every virtue under heaven." The pious Mrs. Katherine Talbot (niece of Chancellor Talbot) had been, in early life, deeply attached to Dr. Berkeley, the son,—an attachment which, it was suspected, she could not eradicate from her heart to the last. Mrs. Berkeley, when angry, would sit for hours relating a set of scandalous stories, all falsehoods of her own fertile invention from beginning to end. Though the very picture of ugliness and defor-

mity, she affected to have been a great beauty, and said she endeavoured to spoil her face, in pity to the worshipping swains, who would otherwise have died of admiration. Her husband was a dreaming, light-hearted, self-deluding man, who bore all this without great annoyance.

There was a Dr. Heneage Dering, another prebendary, — a good old man, but a little old-fashioned, dull, and formal,—son of a dean of Ripon; * who was a scholar, and wrote and printed Latin verses. He owed his prebend to the patronage of the Winchilsea family. He was brought up at a time when Pope was thought to be indisputably the first poet in the world. Dining one day at his house, about the time I first went to college, when I was full of Joseph Warton's "Essay on Pope's Genius," I ventured to express my opinion against Pope and his school of poetry. The old dignitary was astonished at my rashness, and seemed as if he thought me guilty of blasphemy or treason. I maintained my opinions with a good deal of obstinacy, and,—being contradicted rather rudely,—perhaps with some intemperance. Though a good old man, and generally courteous and benevolent, he never forgave me, but represented me as a very forward

* His ancestor branched off from the Derings of Surrenden, in the reign of Henry VIII., by the marriage with the heiress of Brent. He left a nephew, John Thurlow Dering, Esq., of Crow-Hall, near Downham, in Norfolk.

self-sufficient youth. Dr. Warton, however, was generally right, though he sometimes wavered between two opposite principles. He was a man of more taste and elegant literature than strong understanding. If we admit the principles on which the great Italian poets have written, we cannot admit Pope to be amongst the greatest of poets. The dispute yet remains to be accurately combated and resolved; for Bowles and Lord Byron have both left it in confusion.

Dr. Tanner, son of the learned antiquary, bishop of St. Asaph, author of the "Bibliotheca" and "Notitia," &c. was also at this time a prebendary of Canterbury. He was an inoffensive man, but I do not remember that he was in any way distinguished. Dr. Cornwallis was succeeded by Dr. Horne, afterwards Bishop of Norwich; a learned and amiable man of literature, but a little fanciful,—who said he was never happy but when a printer's devil was at his heels. He loved the press, and published many amusing, if not deep, works, on professional subjects. His imagination rather sparkled than shone, and he was sometimes quaint even to the affectation of prettiness. He was a favourite preacher at Canterbury; and, among the rest, the ladies were great admirers of the peculiar character of his sermons. He was a handsome man, with great suavity of manners, and benevolence of temper and disposition. But he was accused of fondness

for money, and rather frugal than hospitable house-keeping, where the members of the cathedral had been long accustomed to the indulgences of more luxurious society: in short, he was not a *bon vivant;* and perhaps found his brother clergy here not quite literary enough for his taste. I knew personally very little of him; but he never offended any one. The thrifty turn was probably the act of his wife; a shy, retired woman, but otherwise harmless. He enjoyed his mitre but a very short time; dying in 1792, little exceeding the age of sixty. He left three daughters. He had, if I am not mistaken, an intimacy with Jones of Pluckley, afterwards of Nayland in Suffolk, a controversial divine.

It was about 1782, after an interval of between twenty and thirty years, that Dr. Warton published the *second* volume of his "Essay on the Genius of Pope." It excited great attention, and revived the disputes about Pope's school of poetry. This dispute was endeavoured to be mainly placed on two of Pope's own lines, so often cited:—

> That not in Fancy's maze he wander'd long,
> But stoop'd to Truth, and moralized his song.

These are ambiguous words, and must have been ambiguously understood,—perhaps by Pope himself. In what way is it here to be taken that truth is intended to be opposed to fancy? The object of all genuine poetry is truth; and ought

to be, principally, moral truth. Are we then to construe "Fancy's maze" to relate to the manner in which the truth is conveyed,—to its language and ornaments? Is it to be, though "truth severe," yet not "in fancy fiction dress'd?" or are we to understand that the truth is to be exemplified by facts and experience, and not by imagined instances?—Probably this last was Pope's meaning, because it is most consistent with the character of his poetry: but if it was his meaning, he struck at the essence of poetry, for it would then cease to be a *creation!*

Collins, in a fit of spleen, wrote his "Ode on Manners;" in which he says,

> Youth of the quick, uncheated sight,
> Thy paths, *Observance*, more invite!

So Pope would have said. The whole question resolves itself into this,—whether imagination can embody truth with as much precision and force, as reason can deduce it from observation of actual facts? If Pope, in speaking of the *fiction* of poetry, alluded only to that abuse of it which is *false* fiction, then it showed the incorrectness of his mind, and confusion of his ideas. All fictions which are not consistent with truth, and an illustration of truth, are bad.

It would seem by the way in which Byron and Bowles carried on the argument, as if all poetry

lay in the language, and not in the thought;—as, for instance, whether similes and metaphors might be drawn from art, or only from nature! Why, the best poetry has no simile or metaphor at all. So says Addison, in his noble critique on Milton.

But if this view of poetry be right, we shall very easily settle the dispute about Pope. What fiction has he formed to embody truth? Are not all his illustrations drawn from observance? Even his beautiful "Eloisa" is no original invention; it is the conception of a powerful and passionate fancy,—not invention. The genius is secondary, because it lies solely in the language and versification. But who can put it in the same class with the inventions of Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, Tasso, Spenser, Shakspeare, and Milton? When Byron wrote "Manfred," and "Cain," and "Heaven and Earth," he was a great inventor: why therefore does he affect to despise himself for not following Pope's model? I am sorry to say, that this seems nothing less than perverse affectation.

I have taken the same side on this *Pope-argument* all my life; and,—strangely enough,—made many people angry by it. Pope is an unrivalled favourite with the matter-of-fact people; and they think it an actual affront to them to doubt his pre-eminence.

They whom nature has endowed with a pregnant imagination, whose minds always prompt

them to embody truth by invented examples, cannot resist the indulgence of the poetical faculty in all their meditations. They may not commit its operations to paper, or even clothe them in language; but still the same processes will pass within their brains. If these gifts or propensities are so decisive, why is a question to be mooted, whether a particular person has or has not a poetical genius? No mere taste, no passionate love of poetry, can give the *power*. The love of detraction made my paltry neighbours consider me a mere amateur of the Muses: I cannot be ignorant whether the faculty of invention does exist in me, or not—nor of what quality that invention is.—Nothing produces so much complacence as precision of ideas. While we have no powers of distinction, but see all things in a mist, we are at the mercy of every one's capricious opinion or dictation. And how few sincere opinions there are!—and of those which are sincere, how few are just!

He who is not known beyond his personal acquaintances will never be fairly estimated; because the jealousy and envy of those persons will discolour all his qualities. The world at large is too wide a field to be so poisoned. Little people govern in a small circle by intrigue, craft, and falsehood; while greatness has too wide a swing to show its strength in the same limits. No mind can think or act nobly without boldness and firm-

ness,—nor any mind which has not a confidence in self. In all these qualities I was wanting in early life; and thus I lost a great part of my vigorous age.

Men must work progressively and uninterruptedly,—not by fits,—to find the extent of their own powers; and they who are diffident, work only by fits, when some momentary impulse overcomes their fears. Thus I passed at least forty years of my life. How different would have been the effect of a perseverance in a regular, unchecked plan! I wrote no long poem; I undertook no great work; I finished very few things, even of those which I began. Yet to have written numerous fictions would have been very easy; and those perhaps would have found a vent. Hayley talks of

> The cold blank bookseller's rhyme-freezing face—

what would he have said if he had lived now? He would have found the check of the frost increased tenfold. He lived in times of national prosperity: now financial ignorance and obstinacy have blighted and ruined every thing.

Hayley wrote one or two novels, which were rather mawkish, feeble, and trite. His "Old Maid," which I think he dedicated to Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, very much offended that lady, as she thought it had a tendency to draw her into painful notice and make her ridiculous. I have

seen those volumes since I read them on their first publication. The best and fairest character of Hayley is given by Southey in the "Quarterly Review," where justice is done to the elegance and variety of his literary acquirements. A rude and brutal speech is said to have been made to Hayley in his latter days by Dr. Cyril Jackson, the retired dean of Christ-church. It seems to me too improbable for belief. The Dean would have had no justification or excuse for such a cruelly insulting speech; and if he had thought himself so superior to Hayley as to feel contempt for him, what right had he to think so?—what proofs of genius or talent has the Dean left behind him? It is unpardonable even to ridicule, for one who has got the reputation of endowments or acquirements, to shut himself up in his own conceit, doing nothing, and then to claim the place of those pretensions without giving any proof of them by actual performance. "My reputation," they cry, "stands so high already, that I must not now venture to afford tests for others to cavil at; and therefore it will be prudent to keep myself in reserve!"—But one must not, therefore, grow insolent upon these untried grounds. Faculty to judge, and faculty to perform, are very different. He who can judge severely and rightly about others, may yet be a very poor performer himself. I am very much inclined to doubt the powers of those who will give no specimen of

them. If Hayley had not a high invention and forcible intellect, his mind was copiously enriched with multifarious acquisitions from study, a retentive memory, and a susceptible heart. He wanted compression; but his moral sentiments were always amiable and abundant, though languid; and surely the range of literature he had mastered, alone entitled him not only to respect but to distinction. Though I will not admit the truth of this anecdote without farther proof, I am not without a strong suspicion that there is some foundation for it; and I believe I could cite the authority of one not very likely to be deceived; but I cannot at this moment put my hand upon the letter, and I will not rely very confidently on an imperfect memory.

Hayley's idolatry of Cowper was very praiseworthy. As far as we can judge from his writings, he was devoid of those detestable passions, envy and jealousy. He felt Cowper's superiority, and it gave him no pain. Yet if Cowper's poetry was good, it must have given him some gentle hints that his own was not so. He was colloquial, and so was Cowper: but the difference is striking; of one it is the colloquiality of simplicity and frankness, of tender, lofty, or picturesque thought —of the other, that of an unenergetic and common-place mind.

Cowper would have been happy but for the gloomy perversions of a religious creed, which

crafty sectarians had imposed on his tender mind. A fancy so brilliant and so pure, and a heart so innocent, simple, and virtuous, must have made him happy; but these people brought upon him the most palsying terrors and the blackest despair. It is true that Cowper does not belong to the first class of poets, because he had little invention; but then the imagery, which his fancy reflects from nature, is beautiful and perfect. Cowper, from a singleness of thought, sentiment, and expression, which comes home to every one's business and bosom, will always keep possession of the public interest;—he will never go out of fashion. Hayley is all artificial.

The favourite poets of the day are certain evidence of the prevailing taste. It so happened, somehow or other, that Mason never took a predominant possession of the public mind. Perhaps he was considered too flowery; though that is not an objection commonly made by the popular voice. He often wrote with great harmony and polish, and there is a great *show* of imagination in his "Elfrida" and "Caractacus;" but there is some indefinable failure of the true tone. Beattie had a decided reign from the time of the publication of the first canto of his "Minstrel," till after the appearance of his second canto. He then came forward as a poet no more, and left the field to his rivals. Joseph Warton never published any poems separately after the appearance

of his thin quarto pamphlet of "Lyrics," in 1746; and Tom Warton did not engage much popular notice as a poet, though there was much descriptive merit in his small collection of "Poems" 1778. Goldsmith died in 1774: so the stage was left to Hayley from 1778 to 1785, unless Miss Seward could be said to divide attention with him. Hayley succeeded by drawing the reader's mind from words to matter, and partly perhaps by his amusing notes.

I speak of these things, because they happened within my own personal observation. William Combe enjoyed much reputation as a satirical writer on temporary and personal topics, and old Soame Jenyns was not yet dead. Though Crabbe, after a long silence, rose into splendid fame, he was at that time little considered. Johnson, though before his death he was esteemed to stand first as a prose-writer, yet never made an effort again to attract as a poet, after his two famous imitations of Juvenal in 1738. Yet, however highly he was estimated, he was in truth, as a prose-writer, far inferior to Burke, both for matter and style. His imagination was greatly inferior to Burke's, and he was, out of all comparison, less original and less varied. Gibbon eclipsed Robertson in the public eye as an historian, being both more glittering and more pointed in language, and more epigrammatic and *recherché* in thought,

while his vast display of minute and untravelled erudition filled general readers with admiration; nor was the freedom and scepticism with which he treated his great subject less stimulant or less palatable. Bishop Watson at the same time had a counterpart, which kept up the ball of interest.

T. Warton's "History of English Poetry," excellent as it is, was too minute and antiquarian for popular readers. But when Johnson died, the public thought of nothing but memoirs and anecdotes of his life; and Hawkins, Boswell, Mrs. Piozzi, and others, had all a full run of success. I never took up many books with more intense curiosity than "Boswell's Journal of the Tour to the Hebrides" on the day of its publication. After more than forty years it has lost some of its charms with me.

Boswell was a man who,—not only with an extraordinary memory but quickness of apprehension, for no one can remember what he does not understand,—had great appearance of folly in conversation and conduct. I knew him about 1788 or 1789, when attending the circuit at the Maidstone Assizes. He had buoyant and jovial spirits, great vanity, and great absurdity. William Fielding, the son of the author of "Tom Jones," played him off with great adroitness, and with an inexhaustible fund of humour, drollery, raillery, and wit. Many years afterwards I knew

his two sons, Sir Alexander and James Boswell: they had both something of the character of the father, and both injured themselves by conviviality. What Gray thought of the father's account of Corsica may be seen in his Letters.

CHAPTER X.

Character of the author's sister, Lefroy, a poetess—Lefroy family—Hampshire society—Visit to Oxford — Ashmole library — Author's sedentary habits — Chambers in the Temple — Sympson family — Tolsons and Bishop Kennet—Poetical production—Discouragements—Poet's brain—How the author spent various autumns—Deaths of various relations of the author—Love of literary occupation—Dangers of a speculative mind—Burns' song on "Bannockburn" — Barren readers of books — Haters of books — Their comments on bookworms — Value of a right mode of thinking and feeling—Censure of country neighbours — Ill-will it will cause—Novel of "Le Forester"—Lord Tenterden's critique—Rev. James Dallaway—Lord Clarendon's descent—Character of William Gifford—of Canning—of George Ellis.

As far as I could be taught the love of poetry, supposing any other influence necessary than the impulses of natural feeling, it was taught me by my eldest sister, Anne, born March, 1748, married in December, 1778, to the Rev. George Lefroy, then rector of Compton, in Surry, and afterwards also of Ashe, near Basingstoke, in Hampshire. Mr. Lefroy was the younger son of Anthony Lefroy, during a long life the chief of the first English mercantile house at Leghorn, where he lies buried, and whose tomb I visited, in the English

cemetery there, in 1820. This Anthony was a native of Canterbury, and sprung, by his mother, from the Thomsons, Hammonds, Digges's, St. Legers, and Auchers. He had an elder son, Anthony, formerly colonel of the Thirteenth Dragoons; who, on retiring from the army, settled at Limerick, in Ireland, and was father of Thomas, now M. P. for the university of Dublin.

Mr. George Lefroy had been a student of Christchurch, and Fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford, as founder's kin. (See "Stemmata Chichelcana.") My sister was one of the most amiable and eloquent women I ever knew, and was universally beloved and admired. She was a great reader, and her rapidity of apprehension was like lightning. She wrote elegant and flowing verses on occasional subjects with great ease. She was fond of society, and was the life of every party into which she entered. She died by a fall from her horse in December, 1804, aged fifty-seven. Mr. Lefroy survived till January, 1806, aged sixty-one. He was an excellent man, of courtly manners, who knew the world, and had mixed in it. In his hospitable house I spent many of the happier days of my life; and, when I first married, in 1786, hired a small parsonage-house in the parish adjoining to him, where I lived two years.

I did not meet literary society in Hampshire any more than in Kent. I never happened to be thrown in the way of the Wartons. It was a dull

country; but it had in its neighbourhood Hackwood, the seat of the Dukes of Bolton, and the very curious old mansion of the Vine, formerly the seat of the Lords Sands, of the Vine, sold to Chaloner Chute, the speaker of Cromwell's parliament, to whose descendants it belonged in my time; and which I often visited with delight. At Hackwood too I found high and amusing society.

But in these two years I lost my wild imagination and literary taste. I could write no poetry, and I sunk into a dull antiquary. They were my twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth years, and part of my twenty-sixth. In the spring of one of these years, I believe 1787, I paid a visit to my friend Mr. Abbott, at Oxford. I had visited it once before, about 1783. I then examined some of the MS. pedigrees in the Ashmole library; and, on my way back through London, called on Townsend, the herald, to prepare evidence for the future claim to the Chandos barony. This was exactly half a century ago. When the claim came forward, in 1790, a book of MS. pedigrees was brought up from this Ashmole library; but it was not admitted as legal evidence. The points it was offered to prove were not of much importance; but there was no doubt of the accuracy of the facts it stated. It named several sisters of James, the eighth Lord Chandos, omitted in all the peerages printed before that time; and two or three other minutiæ not elsewhere noticed, which gave

internal evidence that the pedigree was drawn by one who well knew the family. But the principle of legal rejection was just: it would be a dangerous example to admit such private pedigrees, drawn under no official authority.—In a hot day of July my younger brother and I quitted the Temple about one, P. M., on horseback, and reached Canterbury about twelve at midnight on the same horses.

I was never, after the age of fourteen, very fond of bodily exercise. As my love of books increased, my habits became sedentary; and long rides, and especially long walks, fatigued me. My fondness for books was an inordinate passion; —I have lost it now. For seven years my interest in them has gradually worn out. I cannot take the trouble to lift my hand to a shelf, or turn over leaves to consult a passage; and there is scarce a volume which I can now read through. I had rather think and write than read.

I took chambers in the Temple in the spring of 1783, which I held till Christmas, 1785; spending the summers of 1782, 1783, and 1784, at my mother's house at St. Lawrence, near Canterbury, which had been the seat of Admiral Sir George Rooke, and which she hired of Lord Dudley. The summer of 1781 was an uncomfortable one,— it was spent in the heat of a house in the main street of Canterbury. To this house my mother had retired on my father's death, in November,

1780. It had been devised to my father in 1778, by Mrs. Sympson, widow of John Sympson, Esq., a man of large fortune, whose mother was heiress of John Roberts, eldest son of Sir John Roberts of Bekesborne, who had several other children, and whose daughter Martha was my great-grandmother, by her husband Edward Gibbon. This Martha died about 1677. The Sympsons had been prebendaries of Canterbury for some generations.*

Another daughter of Sir John Roberts married Thomas Tolson, of Bekesborne, to whose family Bishop Kennet was, in his youth, tutor. The Tolsons were an ancient Cumberland family.† Mary Roberts,‡ another daughter, married the last John Coppin, of Wootton, who died 1701.

I doubt if any of these notices bear at all upon the literary character. I believe that the qualities and character of the mind are totally independent of them. I cannot suppose that, under any other circumstances, allowing a liberal education, I should have been different. Whatever is my susceptibility, or my imagination, it would have been the same. A duke of Norfolk or of Newcastle cannot have the fibres of the brain, or the passages of the heart, changed by the outward

* See the printed inscriptions of the cathedral monuments.

† See the pedigree of the Tolsons entered in the Herald's College by the present Major Tolson.

‡ See the monuments in St. Alphage Church, Canterbury, for the Roberts's.

qualities of their descent. Burns, Chatterton, Bloomfield, Kirke White, blazed out independent of adventitious circumstances.

There are some who doubt whether poetical production is the result of any thing more than mental labour accidentally applied. I cannot scarcely think it worth while to endeavour to refute this absurd opinion. Can we believe that even the mighty genius of Newton could by any effort have written good poetry? Mere verses any one can write who can put words together and has an ear. The poetical temperament is very dangerous, because it is morbidly sensitive, and colours all objects with the hues of its own passions. It sees what exists not, and is often the dupe of its own creations. But if it does not invent, how can its product be poetry?

But though nothing adventitious can give the poetical temperament and poetical faculty, many things can destroy them. Where they exist, they often do not come out, or are blighted or paralysed. A feeble self-diffidence, bad critics, cold repellers, ungenerous detracters, ignorant friends, often do this; or a corrupt fashion in the public, which has a temporary dominion, and which requires false and charlatanic substitutes for real genius. When corrupt bardlings are encouraged, the true poet shuts himself up in despair. It was a wretched taste in poetry which prevailed from 1770 to 1800. All poetry was supposed to lie in

the mere language—in the trickeries of metaphors and personifications: there was nothing like the invention of thought, — of noble and wild fiction, — a grand, or intensely-tender, sentiment. An author, who wrote what he put forth as poetry, was a mere artist. A man of inspired imagination, therefore, began to doubt his own powers.

There is a whole world which lives within the brain of a poet; and he can show all characters—all scenery — and all events. He goes beyond the painting of outward forms,—he can enter into the hearts and spirits of mankind. But at this time he was not encouraged to bring forward what he thus knew; the petty flowers of diction were all which was called for.

It is certainly a proof of weakness in genius, though not a decisive one, to submit to the vile and corrupt caprice of popular taste. Positive genius ought to go its own way unchecked and undamped. I lost all these years in unworthy pursuits and humble labours. It will, perhaps, be rudely answered, — "If you could have done better, you would have done it!" Not exactly so;—what I can do now, could I not have done then, with all the advantage of youth on my side? But nothing enables us to work well like confidence, provided the materials are in us.

It is the danger of a speculative mind, as far as success in the world is concerned, that it is too

apt to disregard pressing realities. The art of business lies in craft, and minute and unrelaxing attention; and perhaps, above all other things, in reserve, and a selfish dominion over the temper and feelings. You cannot disturb a cunning man while he is carrying on a matter of business; though, where his interest in concealment is not concerned, he may be the most irritable and ill-tempered of beings.

But, after all, was not my life at this epoch comparatively virtuous? It is true that I did not live enough out in the fields and open air; and then it was said that all my professions of love, of nature, and of rural scenery, must be affectation. Such censors do not know by what processes the imaginative mind works. Does the reader recollect, in Dr. Currie's "Life of Burns," how one of Burns's companions describes the poet's conduct during a ride in the Highlands, in a storm, when it turned out that he was occupied in composing his famous song, "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled?" Realities are only poetical so far as they furnish future materials for the imagination to work with. I sat in my library, and dreamed, and saw visions! I forgot the enemies that persecuted me, and threw their irritations and indignities into the wide air.

A man may love books from a habit formed from an indiscriminate curiosity, and a desire to

exercise and furnish a long memory; but such are barren readers, who add nothing and change nothing. I did not read so. I might be too indolent, or too dispirited, or too occupied, to register my associations of ideas, which clung round what I read: but they came in clusters upon me.

They, who have no studious turn, are not merely indifferent to books: they hate them;—the sight of them they feel to be disagreeable. When my neighbours came in, and found my tables loaded with a chaos of volumes, they turned sick. They seemed to say to themselves, "What a strange, dry, dull life, to be thus enveloped in the dust of old folios and black-letter books! O, what a musty damp they exhale! Give me the fresh air—let me mount my horse again, and scamper over the hedges and ditches." They came upon me sometimes with my looks abstracted, my visage pale, and my spirits grave. I detested their interruptions: they said to themselves, "He is a mere bookworm; he can tell nothing; he knows nothing; he has a confused mind, and wants common sense!" I felt self-abased to have any communication with persons of such a temperament, and such incomprehensiveness; and grew more and more resolved to discourage acquaintance of this cast.

On such occasions the power and value of

rectitude, and elevation of thought, are very conspicuous. The intellectual man, who is calmly confident of the superiority of mind, treats the insolence and raillery of meanly-cultivated understandings with a pitying smile of contempt; and, by the dignity of his calm scorn, defeats their sting. But when he is discouraged and deterred by airs which are the result of mere material coarseness, he is impeded in his race, and gives point to that which is in itself blunt and dull. We talk of birth, alliances, rank, wealth;—they cannot weigh against personal qualities.

But what is the worth of the esteem and respect of those who have neither talent, nor worth, nor generous feelings? They who set what is base above what is noble are the dregs of humanity. The labourer, whose lot has fated him to dig the earth, may be forgiven for ignorance; but he who has had an opportunity and leisure to learn, yet would not learn, deserves reproach and shame: he is merely one of those who are *nati consumere fruges*.

These declarations may cause some ill-will. But of what value are those memoirs which have no sincerity? How insipid and uninstructive is loose, indiscriminate praise! Are the stupid and the foolish, who glory in their own stupidity and folly, to escape with the same courtesy as the wise and the good? Then there is no reward for virtue, or talent, or genius. Why am I to be so

cowardly as to fear the revenge of these people? They cannot take from me what nature has given me; they cannot give me what nature has refused me. He, whose fair name is dependent on the malice or good-humour of others, holds, indeed, a frail and provoking possession.

"*Cui bono,*" cries the arch-browed and critical reader, "all these petty personalities? What signifies where or how you spent your autumns, your summers, or your winters?" If I am allowed to speak of myself as an author,—then only so far as they connect themselves with my writings; and this only so far as it may be a lesson to others what rocks to avoid. I would say, "If you are literary, never settle in a country neighbourhood, unless you resolve to be an entire recluse, and especially not in the province of your nativity."

In 1801 my novel of "Le Forester," in three volumes, was published. As it was not supposed to contain the same personalities as "Fitz-Albini," it was thought less attractive, and had but a dull sale. A part of its outline was suggested by the Annesley story. Many years have passed since I have read it myself, and therefore I will not venture to give an opinion upon it. I remember that I had a letter from my friend Lord Tenterden, with a critique on it, but I have entirely forgotten whether it was commendatory or unfavourable; but I suspect the former: and yet he was

no very lenient critic. He was severely classical, and demanded more polish and pruning than I was always willing to give. My friend Willyams returned about this time from the Mediterranean, and paid me a visit of some weeks. He then married Miss Snell, a Gloucestershire lady, of good family. He was neither a poet, nor had any taste for poetry; his great delight among books was "Peregrine Pickle."

I was introduced by my friend Willyams to the Rev. James Dallaway, who had published a quarto volume on heraldry, and whom the Duke of Norfolk, as Earl Marshal, appointed his secretary; and breakfasted with him at his apartments in the Herald's College. We had a dispute about the descent of Lord Clarendon, whom I maintained to have been acknowledged by the heralds as of ancient gentilitial descent, and whose birth I proved, by the Wiltshire Visitation-Book, to have been registered by the heralds when he was only six or seven years old. I know not what offence I gave him, unless this was the cause, but I attribute to him many anonymous articles of criticism, not of the most gracious kind; perhaps I have been mistaken. I forbear, in return, even if I am right, to make any criticisms on him; for he, no more than any other author, can be exempt from liability to criticism. If I am wrong, I beg his pardon. In vindicating the birth of Lord Clarendon, I was doing a public duty; — I was

rectifying an historical fact, which, in the mode in which it had been stated, put a stain on the moral honour of one of the most illustrious public characters in our national annals.

Willyams also introduced me to the late William Gifford the poet, and editor of the "Quarterly Review," whom he knew at Newmarket, when attending the late Lord Grosvenor. He was a singularly ugly little man, of a wasping temper, and, in my opinion, much overrated both as a poet and a critic. His "Autobiography" is amusing, and there are some good lines in his "Baviad and Mæviad." But he had a self-conceit which led him to despise others in a very unjustifiable manner; and he had an idea of retaining his dominion by menaces and superciliousness. He affected almost a puritan strictness of morals in his writings; but this did not become the companion of the late Lord Grosvenor. I found him, however, courteous, communicative, and frank, when I paid him a visit. His chief literary intimates were George Ellis, Canning, and the Freres. Canning was a great rhetorician, but not a wise man. George Ellis was an elegant versifier and writer, but not deep; he was a man of the world, — of very polished manners, —but a coxcomb, and a *petit maître*. His cousin, a West India merchant and intimate of Canning, is now Lord Seaford. Gifford had a singular rise from the obscurity of his early life, and it seemed

as if his unexpected prosperity had overset him. He was by nature shrewd and worldly-minded; and his editorship of the "Quarterly Review" gave him great influence among the literary classes.

CHAPTER XI.

Epitaph on Dr. W. Egerton, 1738—Death of Dr. Egerton's mother, 1724—Dr. Egerton's character—His illustrious descent—His elder brother—Defensive pride—House of Bridgewater—Pretensions of birth ill-relished by the multitude—Yet the multitude secretly worship birth—Its effect on the fame of Lord Byron—Praise of retirement, and the charms of nature—They who cannot succeed in the world blamed for want of sense—William Cole, of Milton, the antiquary—The Blounts of Tuttenhanger—Author's fondness for genealogy—Lords' Report on the dignity of a peer, compiled by Lord Redesdale—Character given by the "Edinburgh Review," and by Nicolas and Palgrave—Character and person of Lord Redesdale—His elder brother, Colonel Mitford—Richard Wharton, M.P.—Mr. Allan, of Darlington—Who was the author of "Drunken Barnabee's Journal?"—Author's shyness and difficulty to make acquaintance—One ought not to be too anxious to impress an opinion of one's talents—Arts of conversation—Anecdotes not to be trusted—Horace Walpole—Knowledge of men's characters is primary knowledge—*Nil admirari*, the motto of men of the world—Character of Lord Chesterfield—Walter Haste—George Lord Lyttelton.

I HAVE said something of my grandfather, Egerton, in a former chapter. He was buried at Penshurst, in Kent, the seat of his cousins the Sydneys, Earls of Leicester. From all that I have heard, the following epitaph, inscribed on his grave, and written by his brother-in-law Sir John Head, is just and accurate:—

Epitaph in Penshurst Church.

" Here lies the body of William Egerton, LL.D.
" He was grandson of John Earl of Bridgewater;
" but received less honour from his noble descent
" than from his personal qualifications; for he
" had a strong memory and most excellent parts:
" both were greatly improved by a learned edu-
" cation; and as his birth gave him an oppor-
" tunity of being brought up and living in the
" best company, so he made a suitable improve-
" ment from it, mixing the knowledge of the
" scholar with the politeness of the gentleman.
" He had talents peculiarly fitted for conversa-
" tion; for with a great vivacity he had a com-
" mand and fluency of words, which he well
" knew how to express to such advantage, as
" might make him either entertaining or instruc-
" tive. Thus accomplished, it is no wonder he
" was distinguished in his profession; being made
" chaplain to two succeeding kings; rector of
" Penshurst, and All-Hallows, Lombard Street;
" chancellor, and prebendary of Hereford, and
" prebendary of Canterbury. He left behind him
" two daughters and one son, by Anne, daughter
" of Sir Francis Head, Bart., who caused this
" marble to be laid down as a slender memorial
" of her gratitude and affection to the memory of
" the best of husbands. He died Feb. 26, 1737-8,
" æt. 57."

Tradition represents Dr. Egerton to have been a great talker, and somewhat proud. No one will deny his descent to have been very illustrious. His mother was the daughter of a co-heir of Sir William Mainwaring, whose family was undoubtedly the most ancient of all the ancient families of Cheshire, their ancestor having been of such quality as to marry a co-heir of Hugh Kevelive, Earl Palatine of Chester. His grandmother was the celebrated Lady Elizabeth Cavendish, daughter of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, by the heiress of Basset of Blore, whose ancestor had married the heiress of the elder branch of the noble family of Byron. His great grandmother was the co-heir of Ferdinand Stanley, Earl of Derby, whose mother, Lady Margaret Clifford, was daughter of Henry Clifford, Earl of Cumberland, and sole heiress to her mother, Lady Eleanor Brandon, daughter and co-heir of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, by the Princess Mary Tudor, youngest daughter of King Henry VII., and widow of Louis XII., King of France. It is not necessary to say, that this was the highest blood in the kingdom.

Dr. Egerton's elder brother John died before his mother, in August, 1724, and was father of my godfather, Samuel Egerton, of Tatton Park, M.P. for Cheshire, who died 1780.

Thomas Egerton, Dr. Egerton's father, died before his father in October, 1685, and was

buried in the family vault of the Bridgewaters, at Gadsden, adjoining Ashridge.

All this is nothing, except to protect oneself from the insolence of those who give themselves offensive airs on account of exalted birth, pretended or real. (See the Will of King Henry VIII., and Hallam's Comments on it in his "Constitutional History:" see also the books called "Dolman's Conference," of which extracts are given in "Censura Literaria;" and see Sandford's "Genealogical History of the Royal Family of England.")

I shall not enter further here into the details of the House of Bridgewater. The Lord Chancellor's character stands high in the annals of the law: the memory of the last Duke, who died in 1803, will ever be cherished as the father of inland canals. The two last Earls died in 1823 and 1829. Had my mother's brother left issue male, they would have then succeeded to the earldom.

There is no subject more difficult to be dwelt on than that of honourable descent; none on which the world are greater sceptics; none more offensive to them, and yet there is no quality of which every one is so desirous; none to which every one in his heart pays so great a respect. The detractions, and foul words, and affected disdains, put forth by the low-born, proceed exclusively from their envy and their spiteful resentment at the advantage over them thus possessed by those whom they vilify!!!

Great as was Lord Byron's genius, his noble descent—much as he was hated for it—contributed to blazon his fame. There is an admirable article on him in the "Edinburgh Review," 1831, under Moore's "Life" of the poet. Some seem to doubt his inventive power:—it is true, that all his inventions had one colour for their characteristic ingredient, — an intense melancholy and self-dissatisfaction. His aristocratical pride is blamed:—the blame was in mixing it with the utterance of radical invectives, in which he was not sincere.

After all, there is but one pleasure, which is, to escape from the world, and indulge one's own thoughts uninterrupted. All show and luxury is idle, empty, satiating indulgence: calmness, leisure, and, above all, independence, with that humble competence which is necessary for the support of life, are all which are requisite. But there can be no independence or calmness without freedom from debt, which subjects one to indignities that harrow up the soul. Where the mind and temper are irritated in this way, what enjoyment can there be in any thing? and what ripe and perfect fruits can the imagination or the understanding produce? Even the charms of nature are thus clouded; and the airs of heaven cannot soothe us. Yet the morning and the evening, the fresh breezes, the mountains, seas, lakes, valleys, and woods, and the change of seasons, are the delight of human existence; and these are

open to the poor as well as to the rich, to the humble as well as to the high.

I know not why a cottage, neat and well situated, should not be as pleasant as a castle or a palace. I love solitude, and do not think that I ever should be tired of it: I wish I had never quitted it. I have met with little else but mortification and trouble. My imagination would then have been undamped, and my literary labours undistracted. I have undertaken to tell my feelings; these are among my leading and perpetually renewed regrets. Worldly passions enfeeble the understanding, and deaden the heart. One may instruct or amuse more effectually from "the loop-holes of retreat," than in the midst of full throngs of society. I have passed a life of some variety, like "a rolling stone, which gathers no moss;" but I have found little satisfaction in change or in any public pursuit: in every path, craft, selfishness, dishonesty, and false pretension succeeded.

It will be said, that there must be something of obliquity, imprudence, or deficient sense, in the mind of him whom such a fate has befallen. The cunning man always thinks that his artifices are proofs of sound and right talent. Success always breeds a blind conceit. Some may be fitted by nature for the world's game: they may be made of hard materials, with edges not too fine for the coarse blocks they have to deal with; and, as in

solitude mere matter without spirit grows dead, they must shun a life of seclusion as they would shun the cave of despair.

For my part, I almost envy the habits of old William Cole, of Milton, who shut himself up to transcribe epitaphs, abstract old deeds, and register gossip and conversations. He has preserved a few notices of Gray,—who was his acquaintance,—not elsewhere to be found. He was not well received by the Cambridge graduates, who did not like such a reporter of their sayings and doings. He was a fit correspondent of Horace Walpole, for whom he picked up dates and anecdotes. In early life, when resident in Buckinghamshire, he had been intimate with that eccentric old antiquary, Browne Willis.

Hesther, widow of Sir William Mainwaring, remarried Sir Henry Blount, the traveller, by whom she had issue, Sir Thomas Pope Blount, author of "Censura Authorum," &c., and Charles Blount, a celebrated deist. The heiress of these Blounts married in Feb. 1731-2, William Freeman, Esq., of Hertfordshire, and left an heiress, first wife of the Honourable Charles Yorke, mother of the present Earl of Hardwicke, who thus inherits the seat of the Blounts at Tuttenhanger, in Hertfordshire. I have the original letter, giving an account of the death of Sir William Mainwaring, when he was slain on the walls of Chester, on the king's side, in

the Grand Rebellion. My grandfather, of course, would not allow his great-uncle's (Charles Blount) book in his library, but had it burnt.

A variety of accidental circumstances led me early to a fondness for genealogy and antiquities; and especially to the history of the English peerage: but I never encountered so incomprehensible a compilation as the following: "Report from the Lords' Committees appointed to search the Journals of the House, Rolls of Parliaments, and other records and documents, for all matter touching the dignity of a Peer of the Realm, &c. &c. Folio, pp. 448. Ordered to be printed, 25th May, 1820."

This is now well known to have been drawn up by the late Lord Redesdale; and both Sir Harris Nicolas and Sir Francis Palgrave, two most competent judges, have pronounced its condemnation. I suppose the "Edinburgh Review," xxxv. p. 42, (March, 1821,) must have been indulging irony when it closes its article thus:

"We have now followed the committee through the reigns of the two first Edwards, and trust that we have pointed out errors in their Report, sufficiently in number and importance to induce them to undertake a calm and deliberate revision of their work. We consider ourselves greatly indebted to them for their labours; but have deeply to lament that so much industry has been conjoined with such negligence,—that so much un-

necessary caution on some topics has been accompanied with such rashness of assertion on others, —and that so many sound and liberal views respecting our ancient constitution have been obscured by prejudices from the school of Brady and other enemies of popular rights. We know of no way to reconcile these inconsistencies, unless on the supposition, that the author of the Report is a young adventurer in the paths of constitutional antiquities, who brings with him to the pursuit an active mind, exercised in subtile and minute investigations, but who is still dazzled with the novelty of the scenery, and not yet sufficiently acquainted with the region he attempts to explore, to know in what quarter to direct his steps, or on what objects to fix his attention,—while his judgment is warped and perverted by the false and prejudiced accounts he has perused of former travellers, on whom he obstinately pins his faith, in opposition to the evidence of his own senses." This *young* adventurer was then of the age of 72. The occasion given to this Report was, Mr. Dymoke's claim to the barony of Marmion, as a barony by *tenure;* which sort of barony has undoubtedly ceased for many centuries. The usage of baronies by *writ* commenced in the reign of Henry III. The character which Lord Redesdale most unjustly gave to the great and most learned Sir Edward Coke did most justly and accurately belong to himself. (See his Speech on the Ban-

bury Claim, reported in Le Marchant's "Report of the Gardner Claim.")

Lord Redesdale was a sallow man with round face and blunt features,—of a middle height, thickly and heavily built,—and had a heavy, drawling, tedious manner of speech. He died 1830, aged eighty-two. He owed his rise to his connexion with the Northumberland family,—not through the Percy's, but through a previous marriage of the Smithsons.

I knew his elder brother, the historian of Greece, who had a very similar character, understanding, disposition, and person,—but perhaps not quite so severe, and certainly much more learned. The historian had a singular dryness of mind, and the most uncouth and unintelligible style ever committed to paper by a scholar. I knew him in 1794 and 1795; and again sat with him in parliament, 1812—1818.

At the same time I sat in parliament with Richard Wharton, Secretary to the Treasury, and M.P. for the city of Durham, son of Dr. Wharton, of Old Park, the friend and correspondent of Gray. Richard Wharton was himself a poet; he was of quick talents, much literature, and most pleasing manners, hospitable and open; a man of the world, of a handsome person, and benevolent expression. I forget the year he died; but not a great while since. He published a poem on Roncesvalles; which, for some reason or other,

was little noticed. I also knew his colleague, Mr. Allan of Darlington, whose father printed some curious things at his own private press;* he also is since dead. Through his means I procured, at the desire of an intimate friend, the extract of the parish register which identified Richard Brathwaite as the author of "Drunken Barnabee's Journal," in corroboration of a series of ingenious conjectures, by which this very accurate bibliographer had discovered and supported this fact.

Being of a grave, shy, recluse character, it was long before I made acquaintance with any one, and still longer before I became upon familiar terms with him. This has been a great discomfort to me, and a great obstacle in the way of my success in life. Every one thinks me cold, and deems me repulsive, while I consider myself repelled. Cold manners are always resented with great bitterness; and it seems a strange contradiction, that one should be doomed at once to suffer from coldness of appearance, and imprudent warmth of actual feeling.

A man must not be too anxious to impress others with an opinion of his talents: it makes them rebel, and inclined to cavil. They who have a real conceit of themselves are calm and self-possessed; and therefore, being satisfied, they are

* See Nichols's "Anecdotes."

neither irritable nor over-punctilious. They carry themselves with a soft humility, while they are smiling in their hearts at their own sufficiency. These are called the amiable, the frank, and the unpretending. I do not remember any one of morbid temperament, or sensitive, who ever excelled in conversation or first address.

The arts of conversation, indeed, depend on such a variety of ingredients and managements, that they cannot be defined. Brevity and point seem to be two leading recommendations; humour, another: but strict argument, however profound, may extort approval, but gives no pleasure. That which is instructive, if not amusing, in this sort of communication, is axiomatic wisdom; and we like to hear the opinions and conclusions of sagacious and experienced minds, without being fatigued and stunned by long debates. Some excel in throwing out their thoughts in this pithy way.

Anecdote is the great attraction; but it is more entertaining than solid; it oftener misleads than informs: it seizes some single feature, and exaggerates it, or distorts it; and thus causes a laugh at the expense of truth, which gratifies the love of detraction inherent in man's frail nature. There is something vicious in throwing a ridicule upon great characters, and in sacrificing a noble admiration to a *bon mot*. Of all the piquant anecdotes told by Horace Walpole, I doubt if there are many

which give us any accurate information; and after having read a long succession of them, all of which have a tendency to depreciate, we grow sick of human nature. By these sorts of representations, the dull, the foolish, the mean, and the wicked, console themselves for their own defects and inferiorities.

To know the real characters of those who have distinguished themselves, is primary knowledge: none is more difficult; none more rarely possessed: experience alone will not give it without an acute, native insight; an insight which, I believe, can only be attained by the rays of imagination. This, however, was not the spectacle employed by Walpole, when he searched into men's hearts; I am afraid it was the heat of an envious passion: he had littleness in his own feelings, and therefore suspected nothing but littleness in others.

Nil admirari is the motto which men of the world always affect. They think it vulgar to wonder, or be enthusiastic. They have so much corruption, and so much charlatanism, that they think the credit of all high qualities must be delusive. But whatever specks there may be in a diamond, it will be a diamond still; and there are seldom great minds, which are not associated with great moral qualities and noble hearts.

Lord Chesterfield was another who saw nothing but a man's obliquities and absurdities, or some little deviation from fashion and etiquette; and

who could think nothing of Johnson's great intellect and eloquence, if his dress was awkward and manners inelegant. In reading such works as Lord Chesterfield's, we feel our hearts debased and our spirits depressed. It was in this temper and tone of mind, that he spoke of his son's tutor, Walter Harte, the poet and historian,—a man worthy twenty Lord Chesterfields.

George Lord Lyttelton, a man of genius, and a warm heart, was said to be liable to those little absences and forgetfulnesses, which lead to petty improprieties. Such a man was exactly the subject for these relentless dealers in ridicule.

CHAPTER XII.

Rank and wealth without talents will not gain great influence over the world at large—Mind is all—The mass do not think—Uncertainty of opinions asserted by many—Author deemed eccentric—The general opinion thought the true—Truth not to be sacrificed to novelty—Genius may safely rely on itself—Cowley, Addison, Johnson—Intellectual character of Johnson—Many celebrated writers his enemies—His "Lives of English Poets"—Burke—Pitt—Boswell's character of Johnson—Author's character of Johnson—Johnson's "Tour to the Hebrides"—Sir Walter Scott—Johnson's house in Bolt Court—His mind not filled with imagery—His treatment of Collins—Sonnet of the author, written 30th November, 1784—Proof that he always rejected flowery language—His opinions and taste uniform—The just and proper aims of a poet.

RANK, wealth, and propriety of conduct combined will not gain influence over society at large, without the aid of great talents duly exerted: they will have too much weight in the circle among whom they personally move. One could name men who unite all the first three gifts in a high degree, yet are ciphers in the world. It ought to be so—mind is all!—but it must not be mind perverted to mislead those of less capacity. It seems to me, that the general mass of people repeat what they hear and read without thinking themselves, and therefore have no steady con-

victions in their hearts. Eminence can only be tried by comparison among the whole population of a kingdom.

There are many who adhere to the proposition—that there are no fixed and demonstrative conclusions in public affairs, or elsewhere, than in great moral truths—which they do not venture to deny; and that the various opinions expressed by various people are a proof of this: in fact, they swear by their leader—all depends on the person who has gained their confidence, and that confidence is gained by a thousand circumstances unconnected with intellect. But I have battled opinions for years and tens of years, and seen my own conquer at last.

I value a mere rhetorician but little: the command of language is an inferior power; it is the thought which gives the worth—the intrinsic quality of the ore—and not the workmanship. Constant meditation, which "melts down hours to minutes," will assuredly make a head of native powers wise: but they who let the food of the mind only lie upon the surface of the memory receive no substantial nourishment; they are prattlers, whose gabble is not merely empty, but deceitful. As almost every day passes, numerous subjects involved in mists come dancing before my brain, and provoke and challenge me to clear them from their clouds. I do not look to books to guide me, but ponder them in my own intellect, till I

persuade myself that I have reduced them into clearness.

Some of my friends often deem my opinions eccentric and perverse: they do not like to go out of the beaten path, and think that what is commonly received must be right. "O, yes," they cry, "I dare-say you are sincere, and there may be some ingenuity in what you urge; but you know that you often take crotchets into your head, and are warm, and have prejudices and passions; and besides, one against many is fearful odds; and how can we believe that the one will be right, and the many wrong?" Thus it is, that the multitude are taught to have dominion over the mind. No one ought to seek for novelty against truth; but is he to shut his ears to truth because it is new?

Yet who, it may be asked, will venture to rely upon his own mind? Men have ventured and succeeded. What did Bacon, Milton, Cowley, Addison, Johnson, Burke, Byron do? I have sometimes thought that Addison wanted profundity, though he was always elegant and always just. I prefer Cowley's prose style to Addison's: and though Johnson was original in conversation and criticism, I am not sure that he was often original in his Ramblers. There is a great deal of verbiage in them, and vague truisms involved in pompous language: he is often pedantic, and has a sort of swelling dictatorialness. His want of sensibility is a great defect; and if he had ima-

gination, it was not picturesque, and was only awakened by superstitious credences.

By slow gradations Johnson rose to be the most popular writer of his day. Altogether the rise was merited; yet, on some accounts, one may wonder at it. In general the public do not love grave pomp; and they love those who pander to their humours and appetites, and their clamour for political licentiousness, or, at least, liberty. They also love wit and a playful imagination. A severe and melancholy censor of morals is not to their taste. Then Johnson could gain nothing as a gay companion, or a man who took a practical part in the affairs of society. His gigantic and forbidding person, and his stern and coarse manners, drove away all but his flatterers. Nor was this all; they who most influenced the intellectual part of the nation were against him—Lord Chesterfield, Horace Walpole, Gray, Mason, Soame Jenyns, Churchill, Warburton, Hurd, Wilkes, Horne Tooke, &c. He had, indeed, Burke, Reynolds, and Goldsmith, on his side. He could not gain much by the influence of the blue-stocking Mrs. Thrale, and the rich and hospitable table of the brewer in Southwark; and Mrs. Montagu was too courtly to enjoy his society. He flattered Mrs. Carter, who flattered, and indeed really admired him, in return.

I am of opinion that he at last won his way to the supremacy by the force of a great and direct

mind, firmly and with perseverance supporting its own pretensions. The tenor of his terse sarcasms kept many in subjection. He did not rule by intrigue or courtesy; but by fear: yet, having taken the side *against* the people in politics at a time of extreme popular ferment, it is surprising that the tide did not overwhelm him.

When he published his last work, "The Lives of the English Poets," they were not calculated to subdue any prejudices which might exist against him on these accounts; but they were calculated to exalt the opinion of his critical powers still higher than it had stood before. Yet the severity, the sarcasm, the contempt, with which he treated many of his contemporaries, must have alarmed the living men of literature, and especially the writers of poetry, to whom many of his poetical canons were, if just, crushing. He surmounted all these, and therefore there must have been a spirit of life in his writings which nothing could destroy.

But Burke was far his superior in style, in originality, and subtlety of thought, and in richness and beauty of illustration. But it will be said that Burke's writings were confined to politics; he

> To party gave up what was meant for mankind.

Yet how did he treat politics? Not as temporary topics, but as the axioms of universal wisdom—as exemplified by all the charities, and charms, and niceties of minor morals—of "that which

comes home to every man's business and bosom." Burke's pamphlets and speeches have lost nothing of their attraction by time.

After Johnson's death, Burke went through all the storms of the first part of the French Revolution; and the extraordinary productions of his pen elicited by those events will never be forgotten. The view he took of the future effects of that Revolution on all Europe was the reverse of that taken by Pitt. The great minister soon saw occasion to be a convert to his adversary. I never could read a page of Burke without fully concurring with him in almost every word he said: indeed, I can recollect no passage in which I differed from him. Pitt was a man of abstract notions, who knew not how to accommodate himself to the workings of the human heart and human character. Burke saw society in all its fermenting operations—its flames, its clouds, its vapours, and its subsidings. Burke had read every thing; Pitt had read scarce any thing, except acts of parliament, state papers, and finance documents. Burke's mind was an array of imagery; Pitt had no imagery at all. The vigour of my life was passed in their days, and I watched all they said and did.

Pitt's talent lay in finance—not in originating finance, but in applying the principles of Adam Smith; but he carried it too far, and it made him

profuse and wasteful. His mind was directed to find the means of revenue, but he did not look far enough; he did not consider what would be the ultimate effect on the change of property, and on the landed interest. But I must return to Johnson:—

Boswell's summary of Johnson's character does not seem to me very well done. Johnson was a moral philosopher and a critic, but had little fancy and no imagination. His strength lay in his quick powers of discrimination, and the ready and forcible language in which he expressed it. His opinions were the result of observation and reasoning, not of invention; and where he had imagery by way of illustration, it was seldom or never of a poetical character. There was a directness and self-confidence in his manner, which gave an effect to many things he said not intrinsically due to them. He had been a great thinker, and therefore was prepared upon most subjects presented to him. He had read much by fits, and had digested what he had read.

But his mind was bent to analyze, detect faults, and destroy charms. His ambition was to be the evil magician, at the touch of whose spear delusions fled.

His "Rasselas" and his "Tour to the Hebrides" are supposed to have a poetical cast of language; but even here his images are vague,

and his words more sounding than picturesque: they are oratorical more than poetical: there is more of swell than solidity.

He always spoke *ex cathedrâ*, and had none but submissive listeners. He had lived among the chief *literati* of the metropolis, at least from his twenty-fifth year, and was a master of the literary history of his own time. He reflected upon facts, not upon visions—and therefore always seemed to have the acuteness of practical good sense.

On almost all occasions he reasoned rather than felt, and therefore had little sentiment. What he wrote critically came from the processes of his own mind, and what he wrote ornamentally was rather derived from the stores of his memory.

He was an author to whom the booksellers were always glad to have resort, because on any proposed subject he had a prepared mind, and language always at his command.

But as he admitted nothing which stern reason cannot demonstrate, he neither communicated nor secretly cherished any of those spiritual dreams in which a poet delights. Such a mind is better fitted for conversation, because what it communicates is more comprehensible by the generality of auditors. His desire of victory was so excessive as to be unjust, and his resentment of contradiction ferocious.

Envy and jealousy had such dominion over him

as to make him mean and unpardonable in some of his censures. When he gave himself time to deliberate he was benevolent and wise. I am far from denying that Johnson was a very great man in his own department; but then, as in the case of Pope, the character and rank of that department must not be mistaken.

The first rank belongs to him who invents with grandeur, beauty, and truth, on probability. The inventive faculty will scarcely be conceded to Johnson; and that in which he did not excel himself, his envious temper prompted him to depreciate. A great deal which passed in this tour was conversation, which might as well have occurred in Bolt Court as in the lonely, stormy, sea-beat castles of the Hebrides. Neither Johnson nor Boswell had an eye for the scenery of nature, and neither of them could describe it well by the force of imagination. Yet I know not how it is, the respective relations of this tour by these two very different authors are among the most attractive books of our language. Johnson's power of generalization, and Boswell's dramatic minuteness and vivacity, are both displayed with extraordinary happiness. Our curiosity is kept awake, as if we were exploring new regions—not of barbarous and ignorant people, but whence history and tradition might receive new lights; and where the rocky solitudes and the melancholy sounds of the Northern Ocean might have nursed sublime medi-

tations and heroic endurance. The contrast between the modes of life these travellers went to inspect, and those with which they were familiar, added much to the interest. I cannot compliment them so far as to say they have described it as Sir Walter Scott would have described it, though Boswell has preserved more of Johnson's conversation than Scott would have preserved; but the legendary tales, the piquant anecdotes, the picturesque descriptions, the poetical colours, are all wanting. Conceive what a story of enchantment would have been raised from such a tour by him who described the rocks and mountains, and ocean and storms, and savage solitude, of the Orcades in his "Pirate."

I never saw Johnson, though, when I had chambers in the Temple, I resided so near him. His house in Bolt Court was afterwards inhabited by Bensley, the printer, where I have been innumerable times, never forgetting the memory of its former celebrated inhabitant.

Boswell strangely says, that Johnson's mind was filled with imagery:—it was not filled with imagery, but with reasonings laid up by constant meditation, and with which his memory always supplied him when called for. He never gazed upon visions, but argued to himself upon that with which experience and reading had furnished his recollection. Peruse his two celebrated satires—they have nothing of the higher ingredients of

poetry in them; no poetical imagery is to be found there—they are the spiritual reflections or declamations of a moral philosopher, tinged with a deep melancholy, and plaintive from a sense of the sufferings, frailties, and imperfections of humanity. They have no invention, no enthusiasm, none of those enchanting illusions by which our human existence is exalted into a higher sphere. It was wrong of him to endeavour to tear away these delights from others, because he could not enjoy them himself.

Thus he treated the memory of his friend William Collins, with which I was shocked and disgusted, when his "Lives of the Poets" came out, and for which I could never afterwards forgive him. In that Life, while he speaks of the poet personally with kindness and sensibility, he shows a wanton absence of taste and imaginative feeling, and an ignorance or denial of the primary ingredients of poetry.

I am entitled to enlarge upon the character of Johnson in these Memorials, because at the time I embarked in the literary world, he had entire dominion over the public mind of England. I think that his bad taste, his envy, and his spleen, were all hurtful to it.

I remember those days as if they were but yesterday. I may be permitted to give a proof of what my feelings and sentiments then were, from a sonnet written on my birthday, 30th Novem-

ber, 1784, and published in my first volume of "Poems" the March following:—

SONNET. 30TH NOVEMBER, 1784.

This thy last day, dark Month, to me is dear,
For this first saw mine infant eyes unbound;
Now two-and-twenty years have hasten'd round,
Yet from the bud no ripen'd fruits appear!

My spirits drooping at the thought to cheer,
By my fond friends the jovial bowl is crown'd,
While sad I sit, my eyes upon the ground,
And scarce refrain to drop the silent tear!

Yet, O beloved Muse! if in me glow
Ambition for false fame, the thirst abate;
Teach me for fields and flocks mankind to know,
And ope my eyes to all that's truly great;
To view the world unmask'd on me bestow,
And knaves and fools to scorn, howe'er adorn'd by state!

Such was the state of my mind, and such were the objects of my ambition, at that time. I was scarcely aware that the great despot of literature was then dying within a few doors of the tavern where I wrote this. I remember that my friend Abbott (afterwards Lord Tenterden), Martin Benson, lately deceased, and, I believe, Harvey, lately Accountant-General, were of the party. It will be seen that I had then taken up the same stern system of the rejection of flowery language as I have since endeavoured to enforce. I had humbly and studiously attempted to imitate this grand merit of Milton in his "Sonnets," which compositions Johnson with such cold and coarse scorn

affects to depreciate; but which breathe the majestic grandeur of the author of "Paradise Lost."

It will hence be seen whether I had then a correct ambition and correct feelings. I had then formed hopes and aims above those of a pastoral poet, and devoted myself to study the characters of mankind, and to separate moral truths from the delusions of a false imagination. I have been at least steady in this respect. I cannot at the age of seventy express with more precision what still remains the object of my intellectual pursuits. I desire to penetrate and draw the varieties of the human character; to discriminate the nice lights and shades of moral truth; and to raise my heart above folly and wickedness, however ostentatiously decked out by the ornaments of worldly success. I think, therefore, that no one has a right to say that my occupations have been those of accident or vanity, or that I had not an inherent propensity to poetry, arising from the structure of my mind and bosom. Merely to write verses is nothing, if the matter be not poetical, because such verses require nothing but an ear for the position of words: but when the thought is intrinsically poetical from the author's early outset, his inborn bent ought not to be disputed.

I have always set myself against artificial poets: I think them not only useless but mischievous; they bring genuine poetry itself into contempt, and subject it to the charge of being an empty

and childish occupation of the mind, because these pretenders deal in silly flowers or unnatural exaggerations. But the true poet seeks to exemplify moral truths by the rays of an inventive imagination. There is implanted in him a spiritual being, which adds to the material world another creation invisible to vulgar eyes. What is thus a part of his native conformation he cannot escape from, or suppress; he is prompted to it from childhood, he perseveres in it through life. If he is crossed in it, he grows sullen and melancholy. There is a fire within, which consumes him if it is pent up.

CHAPTER XIII.

The produce of toil comes out slowly; the produce of genius, early —Johnson's absurd doctrine about general powers accidentally bent to a particular character—Imagination the author's predominant faculty—Mechanical authors love polish and point—Author's early poems—Not fond of redundant bloom—Extravagant hopes censured—Anecdote of Lord Liverpool—His talents—Lord Castlereagh—Lord Liverpool again—Nature of a poet's fancy—Fame sometimes without merit—Evils of impatience and hasty disappointment—Many extinguished by the blast of the first storm — An epoch, when the author sunk into gloom — Sargent the poet — All authors subject to the influence of fashion—Narrative poetry—Hayley—Beattie—Rogers—Darwin—Della Crusca school—Gifford, Southey, Wordsworth, Campbell, Moore, Scott — Tom Warton — Capel Lofft—Archdeacon Pott—Richard Cumberland—Edmund Cartwright—Sir William Jones—Lord Glenbervie, H. Cowper, F. Hargrave, Charles Butler, J. Reeves—Lord Colchester — Lord Chancellor Hart—J. S. Harvey—Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell—Author's little taste for his profession — His grandfather—Lord Mansfield—London amusements — Epigram attributed to Lord Chancellor Camden—Leading country gentlemen.

THAT which is the effect of toil and accidental turn of application must necessarily come out slowly, and not at an early period of life; but that which begins as it ends, must be inherent, because it precedes artificial acquisition. In him who goes on gradually we can see the traces of labour and

art. It is strange that any one should contend for a theory in which the bent is represented as accidental, when all experience drawn from the observation of the human character is a direct and palpable contradiction to it. It goes the length of saying, that all the powers of intellect are distributed in equal proportions to individuals;—that all the faculties of their minds are in the same degree, as reason, fancy, imagination, memory; whereas we know that one is born with more of one faculty, and another of another; and, therefore, according to that which prevails must necessarily be his bent. Yet this absurd doctrine Johnson lays down in his Life of Cowley.

Why did I from childhood prefer poetry to prose? Because my imagination was the faculty which most required food. I was not content with material realities; my delight was to wander in the fields of spiritual fiction. This was not the effect of education, or imparted habits and influential examples; otherwise it would have equally operated on others brought up by the same persons in the same way. Did the same visions occur to others so situated as to me? Did the same scenery raise the same emotions? Were the chords of their hearts as tremulous? Had they the same golden dreams, the same enthusiasms, the same ambitions, the same hopes of enjoyment and glory? Did they imagine beauty and gran-

discipline give these things to him who knew them not as a child?

What does the author do who is the creature of labour and mechanical skill? He works his words into polish and point, but he borrows his ideas and his sentiments; he has no fountain within to draw from. In mere matters of technical contrivance he will beat the man of genius; because his assiduity will be more regular, and he can work more by measure and rule. I can perceive nothing different from my feelings, opinions, and powers at sixteen, except that I write with more fearlessness. My "Poems," published at the age of twenty-two, remain to falsify my assertion if I am wrong. Eight-and-forty years of perseverance in the same tracks are a fair trial of sincerity. What is done by toil and accident can be surpassed by toil and accident; what is done by inherent bent must keep the station it has once gained.

Many will think that there ought to have been more of that redundant bloom and hot-house fruit, which art sometimes brings forth, than were exhibited in my early poems. The more inventive part I was not yet bold enough to venture: I trusted to sentiments, which, though nakedly expressed, do not spring up in an uninventive bosom. A profusion of bloom often augurs deficient fruit; very ornamented language commonly covers poverty of thought.

The great bar to the enjoyment of youth is its extravagant and unchastised hopes, which subject it to bitter disappointment. I remember a remark of the late Lord Liverpool when he dined with me, in 1794, at Denton, from his encampment near Dover, as colonel of the Cinque Ports' Fencible Cavalry, which struck me as a proof that he was a man of sentiment and moral reflection. He seemed to other eyes to be then in the bloom of his successful career. We were talking of the enjoyments of youth: I believe he was at least nine years younger than I was; but he had already had some experience of public life. "No," he said, "youth is not the age of pleasure; we then expect too much, and are therefore exposed to daily disappointments and mortification. When we are a little older, and have brought down our wishes to our experience, then we become calm and begin to enjoy ourselves."

I assert that Lord Liverpool's talents were much under-estimated. He had a meek spirit — too meek for a premier,—and Canning's overbearing temper was too much for him; but he was a far wiser statesman than Canning, though not, like him, a splendid rhetorician. He was too much of a Tory in his principles, which had been bred in him; but he was very mild in their applications. Though he had abilities and great knowledge, he had not genius; he could not originate, but he could judge with calmness and correctness

on the *data* submitted to him, though perhaps not very quickly. I have no doubt that he meant honestly, and had the interests of his country at heart. After Lord Castlereagh's death he lost himself; his faculties began to wear out;—they had been overstretched. His permission of the change of the monetary system, *contrary* to the principles he had hitherto adopted, (at least so it appears to me,) was fatal to the prosperity of the country from 1819 up to this day (June 14, 1833). I am willing to hope that the dawn of a happier time has begun. Altogether, with many faults arising from his ductility, I consider him to have been an able and wise, though not brilliant, minister.

Lord Castlereagh appears to me to have had this advantage of him, that he was more bold and decided. His knowledge was not so accurate, nor his judgment so calm; but he also, whatever vulgar clamour and party prejudices may say, was a man of very great abilities and a statesmanlike head. The courtesy and elegance of his manners were truly engaging; and as he had more ease and apparent frankness than Lord Liverpool, whose address was repressively cold, he had in these respects a great advantage over him.

I have heard that Lord Liverpool made no figure in his boyhood, at least at school. This perhaps may be accounted for by his timid temper. But if he had not genius, he had apprehen-

siveness; and that ought to discover itself early. To return, however, from the youthful mind of a politician, like Liverpool, to those of a more poetical cast. The fancy of a poet, even in childhood, must of necessity be readily and warmly impressible with all sorts of imagery, and his imagination must be able to new-combine them at his own will. But though these are primary essentials, there must also be understanding and reason to direct the use of them, and elicit sentiments and reflections. The young mind is too apt to be content with a profusion of unarranged flowers and gaudy colours,—and these are what most catch a common eye; but the judgment which can early discriminate and use them with a severe economy, though less likely to gain the credit of genius with vulgar critics and vulgar readers, yet shows that sound combination of various faculties without which nothing great can be done. To have wild visions is an inseparable part of a poet's intellect; but, at the outset, to venture them forth to the world in all their undigested and unrestricted wanderings, shows a want of that sobriety without which future fruit cannot be properly ripened.

Many contend that there is no sure test of merit but the sanction of the popular cry: whether the want of this be or be not a proof of demerit, certain it is that the attainment of it is not always a test of merit; for many gain it by charlatanism

and false glitter, who have no merit at all. The booksellers exclaim, "We have nothing to do with merit, except so far as it promotes vendibility."

The greatest chance of non-success, where there are inborn qualities adapted to the attainment of it, arises from impatience and too hasty disappointment. Where there are talents, and especially genius, perseverance will succeed at last. No criticism, however severe or however full of ridicule, will suppress strong powers if they are true to themselves; but if they shrink and give way, then they have no chance. We have many instances of these truths — Byron above all, and two or three almost as striking among the living. Even just ridicule will not avail where the author ridiculed has in other cases shown his superiority.

But innumerable have been those who have submitted to the blast of the first storm, and risen no more. They fondly put forth their bloom in the first days of spring, unconscious of the fickle weather, and unprepared for it. Thus they go from the extreme of hope to the extreme of despair, equally unjustified in either. Where nature has been bountiful in the gifts of the mind, there ought to be a proportionate and calm self-confidence, without which no one exerts his strength to advantage, nor knows how much he can do. Good poetry is not to be written when the spirits

are low; and when one has no trust in his own capacity.

I have already said that those were years of most gloomy suffering to me which followed my first publication of "Poems." I recognise those poems now with pride; I would not wish one suppressed or altered: but the public received them coldly; and this I had not at that time to bear without deep mortification. It abased me in my own opinion. At that moment Cowper's "Task," and Charlotte Smith's "Sonnets," engrossed the public interest. About the same time the late Mr. Sargent published his "Mine," but it engaged but little notice. A long account of it was given in "Maty's Review." I remember that from that time I could write no poetry for at least six years: I now and then struggled, but not a verse would come. It was the same from Oct. 1826, to June, 1829. Now it is as easy to me to write poetry as prose—perhaps easier.

I was not above the influence of the times in which I rose to manhood: how could I expect to be? I did not therefore occupy myself in narrative poetry and tales of fiction, which were not then in fashion, unless such a tale of common life as Hayley's "Triumphs of Temper," which was quite out of the cast of my taste. I consider such tales of fiction as I allude to, of a higher rank, if well executed, than odes, sonnets, and epistles,—or any kind of didactic, or even descriptive, poetry.

Whether I could have executed such at that period will be taken to be mere conjecture, as I have given no proof by any such actual performance. Recollecting what was then the character of my mind, I believe that I could have produced such compositions, because I always preferred ideal visions to the results of observation.

Perhaps I ought to have included Beattie's "Minstrel" among narrative poems; of which, however, the story, as far as it goes, is very barren, though it is full of beautiful descriptions, reflections, and sentiments. A year or two after I entered the lists, came out Rogers's "Pleasures of Memory," which became instantly popular, especially among the ladies. The lines have something of a cast between Tickell, Shenstone, and Goldsmith. Perhaps the ingenious author has not sufficiently distinguished between memory and imagination. Then came the buckram glitter of Darwin, and the fulsome gaudiness and empty pomposity of the Della Crusca school, which Gifford so well attacked in his "Baviad and Mæviad." At length Southey brought forward a beautiful narrative poem in his "Joan of Arc," and Wordsworth struck out a new path in his "Lyric Ballads." Then came Campbell's "Pleasures of Hope," as a rival to Rogers, but with far more vigour, terseness, and splendor; and soon afterwards the "Anacreontics" of Moore formed a department for himself; and Scott's "Legends and

Scottish Ballads" first roused the national enthusiasm of Caledonia, and soon spread his fame to the most distant regions. To aid almost every one of these in gaining at once the public attention, there was something of the adventitious attraction of novelty; a new line was struck out by every one—unless perhaps Rogers and Campbell, who might be said to assimilate themselves to Akenside in matter, though not in manner; but it seems to be certain that the majority of our readers prefer rhymed couplets to blank verse. My own opinion is the reverse of this; I think that in a long poem the rhymed couplet of Pope soon fatigues; nay, I am even tired of the more free and vigorous couplet of Dryden, which is of that kind the most perfect in our language.

Tom Warton's "Poems," though he is often excellent in description, were much neglected in his life. It is not easy to account for this: he had a high name in English literature, especially for his vast knowledge of literary history, his scholarship, and his taste; and his good-nature and benevolent temper made him very much beloved; nor was his carelessness of habits, and neglect of the petty fashions of society, less amiable and praiseworthy. Perhaps he was a little too quaint, and now and then almost technical in his imagery. Some of his allusions and phrases required the reader to come prepared with a sort of antiquarian, or old-romance, track of knowledge,

of which they had no glimmerings. There was also a want of a sufficient portion of sentiment and reflection mixed with his descriptions.

' There were many others who were occasional candidates for favour as poets, living in 1785. Among these was Capel Lofft, with whom I sometimes corresponded. He had many rays of genius, yet partly huddled up in strange clouds. He had shown himself eccentric at college, and continued so through life. ' He had great acquirements, meant well, and was an enthusiast in patriotic principles, and a general philanthropist; but in every thing he did there was an intermixture of want of judgment, which destroyed its effect. He was a lawyer, a political writer, a moralist and critic, a classical scholar, a man of science, and a writer of verses. In every one of these he showed sparks of genius, yet mixed with such inequalities and mistakes, that he did nothing altogether well. He was always getting into all sorts of scrapes and difficulties where he had the best intentions. He was, as I have heard, (for I never saw him,) a diminutive man, with an appearance the reverse of comely. He died in Piedmont about 1823, aged about seventy-three. He was nephew and heir of Edward Capel, the editor of Shakspeare.* He published more

* See some part of his autobiography in A. Young's "Annals of Agriculture," under Troston, in Suffolk.

than one long didactic poem, and has written a few good sonnets.

Archdeacon Pott, still living, published about 1778 a small pamphlet of "Poems," but from that time abandoned the muse. It contained two or three lyrical pieces, which I much admired. His father was the celebrated surgeon.

Richard Cumberland put forth occasionally metrical compositions, but they were vapid stuff. He had a vast memory, and a great facility of feeble verbiage; but his vanity, his self-conceit, and his supercilious airs, offended every body. He was a tall, handsome man, with a fair, regular-featured face, and the appearance of good birth. For many years he resided at Tunbridge Wells, where he affected a sort of dominion over the Pantiles, and paid court, a little too servile, to rank and title. He wrote some good comedies, and was a miscellaneous writer of some popularity; but in every department he was of a secondary class,—in none he had originality. He was one of Johnson's literary club, and therefore could render himself amusing by speaking of a past age of authors and eminent men. Sheridan represented him as *Sir Fretful Plagiary*. He was a most fulsome and incontinent flatterer of those who courted him.

The Rev. Edmund Cartwright, brother of John Cartwright the patriot, published a pamphlet of "Sonnets to Eminent Men." He has died within these few years at a great age. I do not remem-

ber much of these sonnets; I believe they were very prosaic.

When I entered the Temple, Sir William Jones was in high fame as a commentator and translator of oriental poetry, and as a classical scholar; but the lawyers, rightly or wrongly, held him in little estimation for his skill in their own profession; nor was he considered then to have the talents of an original writer. I had not the good luck to be acquainted with him, nor even to know his person. Henry Cowper and Sylvester Douglas, who had each published a volume of "Reports," were more talked of by the lawyers; as well as Hargrave and Charles Butler, who were editing a new edition of "Coke upon Littleton;" and John Reeves, who had published a "History of the Law," a dry and unreadable book. Hargrave was a man of acute talent, and multifarious reading in the law; and Charles Butler I afterwards knew, and venerated for his vast intelligence, and amiable character and manners. John Reeves was a wasp, who looked what he was. Sylvester Douglas, afterwards Lord Glenbervie, was laborious, and had a great facility at acquired knowledge, but had no genius. He was a tall man, with a high nose, whose looks bespoke his nation at any distance. He was of the ancient house of Douglas, but born without patrimony. If I recollect, his ancestor was the celebrated old Scottish poet of that name. Henry Cowper was

descended from Spencer Cowper the judge, brother of Lord Chancellor Cowper, and was cousin to the poet. I think he is still living at a great age: his father was a general.

At that time, 1782 to 1787, the three who commonly formed the mess with whom I dined in the Temple Hall, were Charles Abbot, afterwards speaker, and created Lord Colchester; Anthony Hart, finally lord chancellor of Ireland; and John Springot Harvey, lately accountant-general. Neither the abilities of the speaker, nor the Irish chancellor, impressed my mind with any thing pre-eminent. The speaker was a master of little forms, and had an epigrammatic piquancy, and an accuracy of classical scholarship; he had a great desire to get entry among the great and in the fashionable world, and was exactly of that calibre and class which Pitt delighted to take under his patronage. Hart was a tall, stout, swarthy West Indian, with large rolling eyes; quick, sagacious, downright, coarse, fond of pleasure; and at that time, apparently, little addicted to law. I then had not the least suspicion of seeing him rise to eminence. Mr. Harvey was a Kentish man, sprung from the same neighbourhood as myself.

But at that time my principal table was that of my brother and sister Maxwell, who lived in a very hospitable and handsome way. I neither loved much the manners or pursuits of

lawyers, nor the air of their abode. The publication of a volume of "Poems" did not give much hope of me as a professional man, though Sir William Blackstone had in early life written poetry. But my grandfather had been at the Bar, and my ancestor, Lord Chancellor Egerton, had risen to the head of his profession. My grandfather had been of Gray's Inn. The following are the words of his entry into that society:—

"1695.

"Johannes Bridges, filius natu maximus Johannis Bridges de civitate Cantuariensi, gen., admissus est in societatem hujus hospitii."

This extract was admitted as legal evidence in the claim to the Chandos barony.—See Grimaldi's "Origines Genealogicæ."

My uncle also was a member of the Middle Temple after leaving Cambridge, but he soon quitted it for a country life and the sports of the field. I sometimes regret that I did not pursue this profession, as it opens to such high situations, and it is singular what a different fate has been mine from that of my messmates. But few are found to go through the first painful steps of this calling except they are impelled by necessity: there must be so much labour, so much subserviency, so much accident to secure success: then how much time must be miserably

spent in the sickening air of its hot, putrid courts; and to what an insufferable quantity of dull nonsense must every attendant at the Bar listen! I remember that when I first attended the courts, all that I heard appeared to me unintelligible jargon, from my ignorance of the forms and technical expressions.

Lord Mansfield was then very old, and spoke low, feebly, and somewhat indistinctly. The other three judges of the King's Bench were Willis, Ashurst, and Buller. Willis was a gay old man, whose whole object seemed to be to escape from his business and his paraphernalia; Ashurst was solemn and dull; Buller was quick, sharp, severe, and somewhat intolerant. There was little oratory at the Bar except that of Erskine.

The amusements of London were then very unlike those of the present time. Ranelagh was a chief evening resort; and it was very entertaining, as all ranks were there mingled. Mad. d'Arblay, in her novel of "Cecilia," has given a lively picture of a London life at that epoch, —sometimes a little exaggerated. The Karrol family (I think that is the name) is a good representation of the West Indians of the day; but the East India nabobs were then driving the town before them. The following epigram was then on every one's lips; perhaps it may now be forgotten; it was attributed to Lord Chancellor Camden:—

EPIGRAM.

When Bob Macreth served Arthur's crew,
" Rumbold," he cried, " come black my shoe!"
And Rumbold answered, " Yea, Bob!"
But now return'd from India's land,
He scorns t' obey the proud command,
And boldly answers, " *Na-bob!*"

Most of the leading country gentlemen of that date, who figured in London as possessors of large estates, are now elevated to the peerage: the Lowthers, Cocks's, Eliots, Hills, Pelhams of Brocklesby, Rolles, Campbells of Cawdor, Cholmondeleys, Crews, Lygons, Lambtons, Wilbrahams, Wodehouses, Bridgemans, Powys's, Ashetons, Curzons, Pierrepoints, Rous's, Dundas's, Ansons, Lascelles's, &c. &c. Few of this class of families are now left to fill the House of Commons, and the whole city has moved to the western part of the town, while all the barriers of society are thrown down.

CHAPTER XIV.

Are the times mended?—The national debt and taxation have destroyed the landed interest—Old gentry of the higher class were manly, well-educated, and polished—Pitt's preference of the mercantile classes—Remaining families of the male-line of the Anglo-Norman nobles—Peers made at coronation of George III.—Peers made by Pitt—Apparent prosperity during Pitt's ministry—Success and advance in public life depends on management—Decline of a seat in parliament offered to the author—Probable results if it had been accepted—Talent of speaking—Characters of chief speakers in the author's time—Whether retirement is good for the cultivation of literature—How the author employed himself in retirement—Sedentary habits—Visits to his mother—Character of his elder brother—Lords' resolution on the Chandos claim—Effect on the claimant's spirits—His death—Consequences of his death to the author—Sonnet of the author, 1807.

Are the times changed for the better or the worse? Is it well for the general interests of the people that the landed gentry should be nearly destroyed? I say, No!—the national debt and the system of taxation have destroyed them. I will not here enter into the nature of rents, because it would lead me into a dissertation on political economy, which has lately been admirably done by Dr. Chalmers; I will only say that rents are the necessary result of a wide-spread domestic culture of corn, and that a nation is rich in proportion to

such culture; so that the prosperity of the landed interest springs out of the national prosperity, and is its necessary consequence.

The higher classes of landed gentry,—they who mixed in the world, and did not confine themselves to a provincial neighbourhood,—were always the most manly, and best-educated, and most useful rank of society for such a political constitution as England. The deterioration and proximate annihilation of them is a grievous loss to the state and the people. It was much accelerated by the character of Pitt's government, by his financial measures, and his ill-selected profusion of honours; by his palpable preference of mercantile wealth, and by his inborn hatred of the old aristocracy. A very few powerful, and especially untitled, commoners remain, such as Coke, Portman, Egerton of Tatton, Beaumont, Vyner, Drake of Amersham, &c.; and among the baronets are a few of the male line of Anglo-Norman barons, as Clavering, Wake, Gresley, Astley, Corbet, Malet, Gerard.

I have seen society turned topsy-turvy since those days—not merely by the contagion of the French Revolution, for it began in England before the French Revolution;—it began with Pitt's first parliament in 1784. The *parvenus* of former administrations only filled minor places. At the coronation of George III. men were chosen for elevation to the peerage who were among the rich commoners

of ancient or noble birth, such as Grosvenor, Curzon, Vernon, Spencer—latterly they have been either placemen, professional men, or Scotch and Irish peers, with very rare exceptions. Pitt's first peers were, with the exception of Sir James Lowther and Sir Thomas Egerton, men chiefly who had newly come into fortunes either collaterally or by change of name, and who were little known in the state, and not at all personally or historically.

There was a constellation of wit and talent against Pitt, but it could not succeed:—Burke, Fox, Sheridan, Fitzpatrick, Lord John Townshend, French, Lawrence, &c. &c. All the point and raillery of the "Rolliad" could effect nothing. It was a national fever produced by the East India Bill, and by the indignation which the coalition of the Whigs with Lord North had caused. Pitt was actually lifted by this tide, rode upon it, conducted it with a master-spirit, and was thus led on to triumph, victory, and a long career of power. But great as were Pitt's abilities, he who denies that this success originated in accidental circumstances does not know history or human nature.

The nation flourished in outward appearances during the first year of Pitt's ministry: some of his first financial projects were good, and gave a spur to agriculture and trade, and a temporary youthful vigour was disseminated through all the

departments of the state. This was principally owing to the enlargement of credit, and the increase of the instruments of exchange through the new system of currency. The spirit and skill applied to agriculture were entirely owing to the country banks. Some evils afterwards arose both to the state and to individuals, but solely from the abuse of this system: it made both ministers and the people prodigal.

Almost all success both in public and private life depends not on talents or virtue, but on management; and, perhaps, the most important rule of all for this purpose is perseverance. Every one will meet with innumerable discouragements: he must rely, therefore, solely on himself; for, as Gibbon has observed, he who trusts to the advice of others is sure to be misled. Who can enter into all the circumstances of another's case?—Who can know all the powers which he feels within himself? There are frailties in the human person which lead us to deter others from a generous adventure. Unfortunately on all my ambitions I always found cold water thrown, and I had a morbid timidity which submitted to such chills. Thus, however mean my pretensions, I continually saw others, whose pretensions were still meaner, mount over my head. My early desire was to get into parliament, and there I should have been seated as early as the year 1790, had I not been cruelly thwarted in this way: a seat for a popular

place was offered me; my relations made a point with me that I should decline it.

As to what would have been the result of my acceptance, they who know me, or affect to know me, may differ. I was then in my twenty-eighth year. It is a school in which the chances are that a warm strenuous mind, if it begins young, will succeed;—it may be baffled or depressed for a time, but it will rise at last. So many lights are then impressed upon it; there is such a collision and such a rivalry; there is so much improvement to be derived from the constant state of exercise in which the intellect is kept, that the probabilities are much in its favour.

As to the talent of speaking, an over-anxiety and ambition to excel may at first defeat the end; but perseverance and gradual self-possession, which is the consequence, will gradually prevail. But this is not to be done when we begin late. In parliament great orators are rare; and one may be a very useful speaker in defiance of occasional embarrassment, and imperfect expression or manner. I have seen men gradually gain the attention of the House by mere self-confidence and boldness, who had no one ingredient of oratory. I remember that even Canning used often to hesitate a good deal in the commencement of his speeches. Lord Castlereagh was generally embarrassed even to the last; Vansittart was slow, and could not be heard,—his voice was so faint; Grat-

tan at the latter period, when I knew him, was laboured, tautologous, and energetic on truisms; Whitbread was turgid and foamy; George Ponsonby spoke in snappy sentences, which had the brevity but not the point of epigram; Garrow was *vox et præterea nihil;* Frederick Robinson spoke with vivacity and cleverness, and in a most gentlemanly tone, but wanted a sonorous flow; Bragge Bathurst was analytical, but heavy and tedious; Peel at that time spoke seldom, and only spoke as if he had formally prepared himself for the occasion, with many protests of candour and humble consideration, in a sort of beseeching tone; Charles Grant, who rarely rose, poured out when he did rise a florid academical declamation, of which kind indeed Canning's speeches often were; Huskisson was a wretched speaker, with no command of words, with awkward motions, and a most vulgar uneducated accentuation; Tierney had a manner of his own,—very amusing,—but entirely colloquial; he seldom attempted argument, but was admirable at raillery and jest. It is difficult to describe the manner of Sir Francis Burdett;—it was generally solemn, equable, and rather artificially laboured, in a sort of tenor voice; but now and then, when it was animated, it approached for a little while to powerful oratory. I once or twice heard Stephens, the master in Chancery, make a good speech; but the tone was coarse and vulgar. Wilberforce had a shrill feeble voice, and a slow

enunciation, as if he was preaching; and his language was of the same character as he used in his writings, with great ingenuity and a constant course of thought out of the common beat; but there was something between the plaintive and the querulous, which was rather fatiguing. Mackintosh was often eloquent, but generally too studied and much too learned for his audience; and he was not sufficiently free from a national accent; his voice too was deficient in strength. Romilly spoke as a patriotic and philosophic lawyer, full of matter and argument, but perhaps a little too slowly and solemnly for such a mixed assembly as the House of Commons. Plunkett was one of the most powerful speakers, but better in the acuteness of his matter than in his manner. Vesey Fitzgerald had a bold, forward, lively flow of words.

If this characteristic enumeration be correct, the aim of arriving at tolerable success as a speaker could not be very hopeless. He who has matter to communicate must be singularly deficient in language and delivery if he can gain no attention, after a little practice, and that command of nerves which a repetition of efforts will secure. At first every sensitive man is frightened at the sound of his own voice.

I am not at all sure that I cultivated literature in retirement with more advantage than I should have cultivated it if I had been in parliament from

the year 1790. In a country seclusion there are many incitements to meditation; but there are also many temptations to languor, idleness, and torpor. It wants that vivacious collision of minds which we encounter in public life, and it nurses that sense of self-inferiority which nips noble energies in the bud. From 1790 to 1800—from my twenty-eighth to my thirty-eighth year—I did but little; and the consciousness that I did but little made me dissatisfied and unhappy. He who is not in good humour with himself cannot enjoy himself. One was too apt to feel—

At quid scire valet, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter.

I will not deny that, on the contrary, in many contemplative fits, or disgust at occasional emergence into the world, I wished for retreats tenfold deeper than those in which I lived. During those times I often worked whole mornings and late evenings, and even far into the silence of the night. I studied the characters of English history with great assiduity, and became familiar with all the biographical memorials of my country. I wrote little poetry, and only occasionally indulged in prose fiction; but I gave intense application to political economy, and loaded my memory—perhaps a little too much—with the dull annals of bibliography. These were not quite idle occupations; but they were far from all which I might have done.

My elder brother, who died in October, 1807, was thirteen years and a half older than me. He had a quick understanding, but I think not a strong one, and no judgment at all. He was not an inelegant scholar, though not very deep read. His taste may be guessed by the fact that he was fond of such poems as Jerningham's. His address was good and his manners polished. At college he had been much noticed by Gray the poet; but he had a sort of sensitiveness which made him morbid and capricious. He was a favourite of my mother, and had been a spoiled child. He had a trifling sort of vanity, which sometimes made him ridiculous, and such a want of prudence as continually injured his own cause. He affected to be most humble where his pride was most predominant and his heart was most set. He was humane, benevolent, hospitable, and regardless of money;—but he had no steadiness of character, nor any fixed opinions, so that he could never be relied upon for a continuance of the same humour. He had a sort of raillery which did not arise from vivacity or pride, or self-conceit, but from an under-desire to throw off from himself a sort of self-dissatisfaction. His mind and feelings were indirect, and therefore full of littleness. The character of the lady whom he married was ill suited to him, and this increased all these foibles. As soon as these two interfered in the management of the claim to the peerage they marred every thing.

Such was their indiscretion that they admitted into their councils and confidence Sir Isaac Heard —a serpent of extreme duplicity and perfidy, who was the most bitter enemy of the claim, and the known instrument of the animosity of the D——. of N———. Mr. Pybus, M.P. for Dover, and many years a lord of the treasury, who was first-cousin to Mrs. B., had also a great dominion over my brother's mind. He was the person who wrote the circular letter by which the claim was then defeated. He did not mean ill: he was zealous for the cause; but he was a pompous, empty man, who liked to flourish with his own pen. My brother had been put into orders, under a promise to be provided for by Dr. Egerton, bishop of Durham, father of the two last earls of Bridgewater,—who never kept his promise—and who was a specious courtier and man of the world, with (as I suspect) very little solidity. As to his two sons, their characters were very opposite both to their father and to each other; but all three most insolently proud.

My brother died, as my father did, of the stone, in excruciating pain. When he was in good humour he could be very pleasing, for he was gentle, apprehensive, and attentive. His looks were gentlemanly, and his features and expression good, though his dress was often greatly neglected. At college he had the odd fate of having for one of his chief familiars Willoughby, who finally suc-

ceeded as the last lord Willoughby of Barham, and whose uncle had lately obtained that peerage as the remote collateral heir, after his ancestors had been wrongly kept out of it for nearly a century. This took place after much opposition, in 1767. His ancestor, Henry Willoughby, grandson of Sir Ambrose who commanded one of the ships at the defeat of the Spanish Armada, had gone over to Virginia in an humble situation, and in the mean time a younger branch had stepped into the peerage. The uncle who thus at last succeeded was, I believe, a cutler on Tower Hill. My brother's friend was a very amiable unassuming man, and died young, about 1779.

The unfavourable resolution of the lords' committee of privileges was not borne with fortitude by my brother. He had positively brought it about by his own indiscretion, in sending out a circular letter; but it preyed upon his spirits and aggravated his disease, under which he lingered out four more years. He died at Wootton, where he was born, and was buried in the vault of his fathers. He was kind to the poor, and beloved by them, for his manners were gentle and conciliatory, except that he now and then indulged in a sort of banter, which they were in doubt whether to take as familiarity or a raillery which bespoke contempt. He was neither a sportsman, nor a bookworm, nor a man of business; nor was he a

dreamer, nor a man of spiritual imagination. He never came into possession of the bulk of the family fortune, because his mother, on whom the larger part was settled, outlived him. His house, however, was always full of company, and they who were intimate with him were fond of him. His debts at his death did not exceed £6000; so that with a negligent economy he had not been very expensive. He paid little attention to show. My mother had paid all the expenses of the claim, which were very heavy. The temper of his wife, under whose dominion he was, prevented my being on the best terms with him, though we lived in adjoining parishes,—a circumstance which rendered such a choice of residence on my part very injudicious.

Thus my brother outlived my father within a month of twenty-seven years. My father himself had survived his elder brother only a few months, and to the last could never be quite sure that his brother might not marry: indeed an attempt was made by a young lady of no fortune at Deal—the sister of a captain in the navy—to entrap him, only a year before his death, and the scheme was blown up by the timely interference of some friends of the family. My uncle, though elder, made a settlement of part of his estates on my father's marriage, and always shared the rest with him;—but the inheritance was liable to be defeated in this way. This was another reason

why my brother had been put into a profession, besides the expectation of the Bishop of Durham's patronage.

There are those who will condemn me for this attempted analysis of the character of so near a relation as a brother, as I remember was done before when I spoke of some disagreements between him and me. But when we are to speak at all, we are to speak the truth in candour. I do not recollect any one of the same or a similar mould and temperament either in body or mind. With a morbid anxiety, he affected to be gay and jocose; and they who knew him, knew that when he seemed to deal in a sort of careless and playful raillery, he was, for some concealed reason, most uneasy and disturbed; while the superficial, where he was most cutting, were often pleased with him for what they thought a lively and cordial familiarity. Now and then he had flashes of thought or vivacity, and especially a momentary command of language, which looked something like genius. He was not calculated for happiness, because he had no firmness of mind. From the commencement of the claim he had a difficult part to support, which he did with great uncertainty and frequent inconsistencies.

On his death, new and heavy responsibilities fell on me. I had two inheritances to protect, the peerage and the family estate. As to the first, who could say what remained to be done?

As to the other, the intrigues which were going on were so unnatural that I could scarcely bring myself to suspect them. To counteract them required a promptness of action, a watchful suspicion, and a craft, to all of which my nature was averse. I was too much lost in my books and my meditative and literary abstractions; and I had an openness and irritability of temper, of which deep and fraudulent cunning was always ready to take advantage. It was a most stormy and dangerous time; but I had often a defying, gigantic, and rash fortitude. Such a fortitude is not fitted for success in the affairs of the world. All the haters of the family—all who felt a desire to pull us down—looked with exulting joy on this schism. Meantime my mother declined into the vale of extreme old age; the lamp of her life was glimmering out; her understanding grew feeble, and her resolutions feebler still; her temper changed, and flatterers entirely ruled her. My visits became less frequent, because they were painful, and never could I on any account conceal my feelings. This was exactly what the plotters wished and contrived: my absence was that on which they most relied, because nothing offended my mother so much as what she construed to be inattention to her.

Nature gave me a buoyant mind, though liable to great depressions. Its elasticity has by some been called recklessness; it never failed me but at

two periods of my life, when its strings seemed broken. It did not fail at the crisis I am speaking of, though almost any one would have sunk under the trials I then was subjected to. Many of them were as irritating as they were destructive. Affronts were put upon me on purpose to ruffle my temper, and take advantage of the indiscretions of my warmth.

I did not abandon my intellectual pursuits, and generally sought self-oblivion in my literary labours. I sometimes wrote sonnets, and soothed myself by composing the papers of the "Ruminator." But if any one thinks that these anxieties and distractions were no obstacles to my success in literature, he is very much mistaken. Does not grief weaken and indignation waste energies which ought to be reserved for better purposes? The last sonnet in the fourth edition of my "Poems," 1807, is in the following words:

SONNET.

With life's unceasing tempests struggling still,
Onward I go;—no interval of rest
To calm the troubles of my beating breast;
But thus it is, perchance that I fulfil
Th' allotted part that is my Maker's will;
And thus hereafter, when his high behest
Shall call on trembling mortals to attest
Their labours here, some mercy for the ill
That I have done on earth I may obtain.
Neglected, scorn'd, traduced, with threats pursued,
Which boldest minds have awed, yet all in vain:
The Muse's rites no sufferings have subdued;
From paths her votaries haunt I cannot swerve,
Careless of gaining praise, if I deserve.

CHAPTER XV.

Fourth edition of the author's "Poems," 1807—Sonnet from that edition—Proof of uniformity of sentiment—Attempt to show in what that uniformity consists—Imaginary characters the leading essence of poetry—Johnson's "Tour to the Hebrides"—His Latin "Ode on the Isle of Skye"—Improbabilities censured—Proper inventiveness—The mob judge of merit only by success—Chatterton, Burns, Kirke White, Byron—Circular letter of the Chandos claimant—Lords' resolution not final—Author left alone, and without the support of party—What is the legal and constitutional protection of a peerage right—Order of St. Joachim conferred on the author—Years 1808 and 1809—Times of tumultuous feeling—How soothed—Not melancholy for want of retirement—Want of self-complacency—Origin of Brydges family—Birth nothing without personal merit—Sonnet, written 1784—Another, two days before—A third, 1794—Sick of worldly ambition—Wearied with the troublesomeness of the claim—Its duration for more than thirteen years—Military life—Return to Denton—Literary occupations—"Fitz-Albini"—"Theatrum Poetarum," and "King James's Peers"—Yeomanry—Size of Denton mansion—Its fall into decay.

THE date of the advertisement to the edition of my poems just mentioned, is June 16, 1807; six-and-twenty years ago. This is the last edition of my miscellaneous poems, except such as I have reprinted in the "Anglo-Genevan," 1831. I find the precedent sonnet also applicable to this crisis:—

SONNET.

Thou must not be another's, O my Home!
Here, where my infant children's voices shrill
Thy spacious halls with constant echoes fill,
From the rude stranger sacred be the dome!
And should some upstart with rash heart presume
To fix beneath thy shelter his abode,
May nightly ghosts his guilty conscience goad,
And fiends by day around his pathway roam!
When all this numerous race that sport around
Shall with their parents low in earth be laid,
Still may their children's children here be found
To own this pile, and save yon growing shade!
"Here," may they say, "our grandsires dwelt of yore,
And here they nursed the Muse's sacred lore."

I perceive, or think I perceive, that I have always held the same tenor of sentiment and expression, from the earliest poetry I have written,—if I may call it poetry. I like imagery, but am of opinion that it will not do, unaccompanied by sentiment and reflection. There is one thing more, which raises poetry into a higher class: this is, when the scenery, the facts, and the characters, are imaginary. One can write more freely in an imaginary character than in one's own, or that of any real person whose history is well known. It is this which is the essence of poetry, because it is invention, or creation. But we are not precluded from clothing real persons with imaginary feelings and qualities and circumstances. Let us suppose a poet tracing in his imagination Johnson and Boswell along

their tour through the Hebrides, accompanying them in the stormy night, when the northern waves were lashing the rocky walls of Lord Errol's habitation at Slane's Castle, or listening to the conversation in Macleod's rude wave-breaking towers of Skye, and delight in the poetical mood with which it inspired that stern moralist, when he wrote the ode beginning

> Ponti profundis clausa recessibus,
> Strepens procellis, obsita rupibus, &c.

—the poet would be forgiven for giving the tourists many noble emotions and images which they never experienced.

I insist on it, that such are the proper fictions of poetry,—not mere images and flowers of illustration. All mere poetry of style is, at any rate, no more than secondary poetry; and I should not rate it so high,—I should call it little better than versification. But when a writer of verses speaks in his own person, describing naturally and eloquently the ideal world which surrounds him, then he rises into poetry,—but perhaps not in so high a tone of feeling and description as if the character drawn be the creature of imagination. It must, however, be the produce of a believing imagination,—not of any whim or force: one improbability, one exaggeration, will destroy the charm.

There is less of this in the great body of poetry than could be supposed. Authors are always

seeking to astonish and surprise, either by incident, imagery, thought, or diction; and they suppose this to be invention. Sometimes this arises from bad models, and bad canons of criticism; and sometimes from deficiency of genuine powers. Writers of verses thus become mere artists, and sing tunes like birds in musical snuff-boxes,—equally quivering their throats and flapping their golden wings by mechanism.

A poet is one who depends on the inventiveness and spirit of his thoughts,—not on the rhetoric and metrical harmony of his language. He is one set apart from the multitude in his gifts, his views, and his emotions. He may be enfeebled, or be mangled, but the qualities of his being will still be *disjecti membra poetæ*. The gold ore may be covered with dirt; but still it will be gold which the dirt cannot deteriorate. Such opinions are satisfactory; because if we think that excellence depends on what is accidental or adventitious, we can never be at ease. No one who has the poetical faculty can separate himself from it; it attends him at all times and under all circumstances.

But the mob can only judge by success; they have neither taste nor knowledge to appreciate intrinsic powers: where fame does not attend merits, they are quite insensible to them. Chatterton, or Burns, or Kirke White, or Byron, would have been nothing to them, if the voice of fame

had not taught them to praise and wonder. Of him who, having rich stores of mind, throws them neither into writing nor conversation, it may be asked, who can be expected to form a favourable judgment? But here the question is begged: who does not throw them either into one or the other? People hate their superiors, and only court them when they think they can be of service to themselves.

The committee of the Lords had, by means of the ill humour produced by a perverted comment of my brother's circular letter, requesting the attendance of the Lords, reported his claim not *sufficiently* proved. This was no legal judgment, and it ought not to have been suffered to have rested there: but during the four remaining years of my brother's life his health was excruciating, and his spirits were destroyed; and claimants had been commonly intimidated into a submission to the result of such a mode of investigation. It immediately struck me not to be final; but I had not then sufficiently considered the profound and noble judgment of Lord Holt on the Banbury Case, in K. B., 1695; so that I was not so sure of that constitutional doctrine as I am now.

I stood alone: I had not the support of any political party, nor of any circle of literary friends, as if I had lived in the metropolis: my neighbours were addicted neither to literary nor intellectual pursuits, nor had they any idea of name or pedi-

greo beyond the aboriginal plough-tail squires of the soil, who could be traced in their own county and on the same manor for a few centuries. The law has decided that "*no one can be ousted of his peerage but by due process of law;*" but a committee of privileges is well known not to be a legal court of judicature; nor are its proceedings legal processes, but solely *opinions:* so Lord Holt has decided. Nor is it in the option of any one on whom a right of peerage has fallen by inheritance to give it up or abandon it if he will. Thus the peerage remained in me by law, and I had properly no choice about it. But this is not the way in which the vulgar think; and this doctrine is not generally understood. I have found few lawyers much acquainted with the Banbury Case, though fully reported by Skinner, Lord Raymond, Salkeld, and others; and copied into the "State Trials."

I was like a single old tree in the desert, when tempests blow;—the foliage rent, the branches dismantled, bending to the storm, but not stricken at the roots. When I bent, it was but for a moment; my head rose again into the air. My name was not entirely unknown abroad; for the Order of St. Joachim was conferred on me in November, 1807, without my ever having even heard of it, till I received Sir Levet Hanson's letter two or three months afterwards. What had been accepted by Lord Nelson in all his glory

could not, I thought, be refused by me. But much ill-will was, as usual, vented on this trifling occasion. I wore the ribbon in spite of these detractors and vilifiers, and wear it now.

I cannot, by mere recollection, state the particular things I wrote in 1808 and 1809. My spirits during those two years were, no doubt, very tumultuous. It became a necessary part of the schemes which were going on against my inheritance, even for some of my own blood to decry and insult me. Never were the advantages of an imaginative temperament more decisive. The storm did not merely shriek,—it howled and roared around me: yet I stood firm. My faculties were not paralysed: I persevered in my heavy literary undertakings; and all my labours were gratuitous. But I suppose it has arisen from the fever in which my spirits then were, that my recollections of the particular incidents of those two years are less distinct than any other. The Duke of York had given my eldest son an ensigncy in the First Foot-Guards, and my second son a cornetcy in the Fourteenth Dragoons; and my third son was a midshipman, first in the Glatton, under Captain Selcombe, and then in Le Tigre with Captain Hallowell; and my eldest son was with General Moore when he was killed at Corunnä.

So tremendous were the various anxieties which then hung upon me. Some other authors, like

Gray, have sunk into melancholy for want of excitement. I had no want of excitement. I look back now with astonishment at the fortitude with which I bore all these things. I attribute it entirely to the busy exercise of my mind in the varieties of literature.

But there is nothing like self-complacency. This I had not. It is not my nature to be satisfied with myself. I endeavour to be so, because it promotes happiness, even if it be a delusion. The right of peerage, which *per legem terræ* had fallen upon me, was a comparatively ancient one: it was created by patent at the coronation of Philip and Mary, 1554; but it was then only a confirmation of one of the Anglo-Norman peerages, which had come by marriage into the Brydges family in the reign of Edward III.; and, by the male line, there is no doubt that this family stands among the very first as male descendants of Johannes de Burgo (*Monoculus*), Earl of Comyn, in Normandy, who came over with the Conqueror, and left ten male branches all enjoying the peerage either of England or Ireland, and of whom one was made Earl of Kent by Henry III. The branches of my own particular house of peerage were once numerous, and had suffered various lots of fortune: they had passed

Per varios casus, per tot discrimina rerum.

They are, as far as I can trace, now all extinct, except my own branch, which has with difficulty,

in a succession of generations, carved out its own fortunes. And here I stand alone,—all but my own son; and my brother, and his only son, a cornet in the Third Dragoon Guards.

But birth is nothing, unless it inspirits the possessor to deserve well by personal qualities and a noble mind. What my own mind is, it is not for me to pronounce judgment on. No culture or toil will give it, if its merits be not inborn: if they are inborn, and be not neglected in the treatment of them, then no envy or malignant comment will take them away. One may deceive himself as to what his thoughts and feelings were at a distant period, unless he has written them down: if he has written them down and printed them from his first manhood, what deception can there be? At all ages, in all humours, under all circumstances, I have written in the same tone. I do not perceive that my style varies: therefore I am entitled to believe that whatever my degree and character of mind may be, it is fixed and inborn.

Thus, then, nature made me imaginative, contemplative, literary;—sensitive even to morbidness; abundant in moral reflections; irritable, but soon relenting; forgetful of injuries; grave, yet with an indestructible elasticity of hope; shy, yet frank and communicative after the first address; grateful for civilities, and enthusiastically seeking honourable fame. It was thus that I wrote in my twenty-second year:—

SONNET,

WRITTEN AT WOOTTON, AUGUST 16, 1784.

Ye scenes, my melancholy soul that fill,
Where Nature's voice no crowds tumultuous drown,
And but through brakes of trees, the lawn that crown,
The paths of men are seen; and farther still,
Scarce peeps the city-spire * o'er many a hill.
Your green retreats, lone walks, and shadows brown,
While sheep feed round beneath the branches' frown,
Shall calm my mind, and holy thoughts instil.—
What though with passion oft my trembling frame
Each real and each fancied wrong inflame,
Wandering alone I here my thoughts reclaim:
Resentment sinks, Disgust within me dies;
And Charity and meek Forgiveness rise,
And melt my soul and overflow mine eyes.

This proves that I might be entitled to take for my motto *Semper idem*. It had been long since I had looked at these poems; and, on recurring to them, I am astonished at their identity. The accuracy with which I then described both the scenery and my own feelings, is now a great satisfaction to me. I admit it to be a proof of fancy, moral sentiment, and self-observation, rather than invention, and therefore does not rise to the highest class of poetry; but at that age, the greater portion of writers are apt to be extravagant, and to overcolour.

I find another sonnet, written two days before, in the same tone:—

* Canterbury Cathedral.

SONNET,

WRITTEN AT WOOTTON, AUGUST 14, 1784.

O ye, the scenes that nursed my childhood sweet,
Though many a mark to Time's rude sickle bow
Which once I rear'd, and though the fervid vow
No more to yon fall'n bench shall draw my feet;
Nor the green hedge, beneath whose dark retreat
For boyish frolics oft I twined the bough,
Remain;—yet in each tree, whose shadowy brow
Spreads o'er the lawn, an ancient friend I greet.
Fancy has trick'd thy hill and wood and vale
With fairy shapes; and from each shrub and flow'r,
Each sound, the woodman's stroke, the thresher's flail,
And of the kennel'd hounds the loud uproar,
My fearful smiles, past friends, or pleasures frail,
Which all my infant ecstasies restore!

The lapse of half a century has not changed me in those respects. Were I to wander over the same scenes now, the same reflections would arise, and the same emotions be awakened, though many others of regret would be added to them. Ten years afterwards I wrote a third sonnet on this place, which continues the same strain:—

SONNET,

WRITTEN AT WOOTTON ABOUT 1794.

While I re-wander o'er this wood-crown'd steep,
Yon sheep-clad lawn, and this secluded dell,
Yon mansion, and yon holy tower, that peep
From the thick trees, where in their silent cell
The hallow'd relics of my fathers sleep,
I strive in vain the tumults to repel
That force mine eyes with sad regrets to weep,
Since my sweet childhood's lost delights they tell.

Here my loved parent pass'd his happy days
In rural peace, with every virtue warm'd;
While the wide country round, that rung his praise,
His sense directed, and his goodness charm'd:
But I, alas, to genuine pleasures blind,
Toss'd on the world's wide waves, no quiet find!

It is apparent that I already began to repent the doubtful course of worldly ambition into which I had partly been drawn. But my regrets were only fitful: I could not reconcile myself to unbroken retirement; and I accordingly, the next year, accepted a troop in a regiment of Fencible Cavalry. The process of the claim to the peerage, which began in October, 1789, and which continued thirteen years and three quarters, till June, 1803, kept the whole family in a state of suspense and uneasiness. We did not know the station in life to which we were fated. The expenses also were great; and the vexatious opposition disturbed our tempers. Once I vowed to shut myself up at Denton, and never to go out of its grounds. There was a stirring spirit in the movements of a military life, which a little drew off my attention from these things: but my private affairs required more frequent regard than a military life would allow; and my attendance in London was often required when my regimental duties would not permit it; besides that, the large quantity of land which I retained in my own culture was left at the mercy of stewards and

bailiffs, over whom a watchful and severe eye is always requisite.

At length, in May, 1797, I gave up my commission, and returned again to Denton. I had amused myself by writing the first two or three chapters of "Fitz-Albini," at Ludlow, in February, 1797: on my return to Denton I continued it, and it was published by White in Fleet Street, in October, 1808. At that moment I passed through London on a visit to Berkshire and Hampshire; and on my return, a month afterwards, I found all the impression sold. The aristocracy were pleased with it, at a time when levelling principles were going on with such fury. A favourable character of it was given in the "British Critic;" of which, many years afterwards, the author was disclosed to me, who did not know at the time of writing it the name of the author of the novel, as he himself on this disclosure assured me. I remember White showing me a curious note from the first Marchioness of Bute, on giving an order for the book. But my own petty neighbourhood were furious about it: they would have hung me to a lamp-post, if they had dared!—they have never forgiven it to this hour. It was written sportively; the sheets being sent to the press by the post, as they were written. It is deficient in story, as I believe all my tales are. Were I to live again, and renew this part of

my literary career, I would certainly give more story.

My edition of Philips's "Theatrum Poetarum," and my "Memoirs of King James's Peers," were going on at the same time.

I also raised a troop of yeomanry about this period, of which I retained the command for some years,—I believe more than ten years. They put me to a considerable expense. My large hall was well calculated to receive the whole troop, at occasional entertainments; and it was of that massy and ancient character, well fitted for such a purpose. To the right and left were the dining and drawing-room, each thirty feet by twenty, and over the hall the spacious library, well stored with books: on the third story the gallery, seventy feet long, with ancient oak wainscot, and chambers along the sides. All is gone! After 1810, when the house became uninhabited, the wind and weather broke in upon it, and continually damaged the large and heavy roof; and the sad neglect of those left to the care of it did in ten years what more than two centuries had not done. It was thought advisable to pull it down, while I was on the Continent, in 1822; and a small lodge was built in its stead.

CHAPTER XVI.

Letter of Gibbon, the historian, to the author, 1793.—Gibbon's ignorance of his own family—Some account of them—The least poetical portion of the author's life from 1793 to 1803—No one should go out of his natural character—A poet may be a politician—Who dares pronounce himself a poet?—One proof results from the duration of the pursuit—More than a fourth of those included in Johnson's "Lives" no poets—Johnson's poetical taste—These "Lives" damped the author's spirits—Effect lost upon authors born later—French revolution broke mental chains—Darwin's "Lives of the Plants"—Poetical criticisms in "Edinburgh Review" not consistent—Byron's criticisms on poetry capricious and perverse—He did not write by his own rules—Author's censure of extravagant poetry—Fashion will have some influence on every author—Author's revived ambition—Could not get into parliament without a great command of money—Corruption of electors—Effect of retirement on talents and on genius—The constant tumult of the author's feelings has swept away many things from his memory—Visits of Stebbing Shaw to the author at Denton, about 1800—Triumph of enemies to the family at defeat of Chandos claim—Treacherous behaviour of certain peers—Author's indignation at the retrospect—The claimant's feverish irritation—Momentary satisfaction of the author to have the proceedings brought to a close at any rate—But subsequent revival of regret that so important a possession should be defeated by a silly circular letter—Cunning use made of that letter by the opponents.

In 1793 I received at Denton the following letter from my cousin, Edward Gibbon, the celebrated historian, in reply to some articles communicated by me to the "Gentleman's Magazine," 1788.

"Lord Sheffield's, Sheffield Place,
"7th Aug. 1793.

"By the strange indifference of my father and grandfather, (both Edwards, the last of whom was the son of Mathew,) I had remained very ignorant of the history of my own family; and the information I obtained from your curious article was not less new to me than it was interesting. The civility and regard with which my name was mentioned entitled the anonymous writer to my grateful thanks: my curiosity was excited, and on my return to England, about two months ago, I applied to Mr. Nichols to discover (if possible) our friendly and ingenious correspondent. In that correspondent I have now the satisfaction of finding a respectable kinsman; and shall endeavour to use, without abusing it, his very friendly and communicative disposition.

"It gives me pleasure to know that you can now make several additions to the article already inserted in the 'Gentleman's Magazine;' but as I am ignorant of the nature and particular objects of those additions, I must be content to say, in general, that any communications relative to my family will be highly acceptable. As you may wish me, however, to point out more distinctly even my first enquiries, I shall specify two heads which more strongly attract my curiosity.

"It seems established by the evidence of Philipot

that all the Gibbons of Kent are derived from one common stock; and you represent Thomas Gibbon, the purchaser of West Cliff, as of a younger branch of the Gibbons of Rolvenden. Can you trace the series of his ancestors? Are you able to connect him with the elder branch—or can you discover, at least, the name of his father? When I receive the favor of your answer, I will inform you (for I have not been totally idle) of what I know or suspect. As you must speak from the evidence of old deeds, I should be curious to learn the exact date of his purchase, and to compare the old price with the modern value of the West Cliff estate. I am very glad to hear that you possess original letters of my great-grandfather, Mathew. Perhaps from these letters you may be able to extract some circumstances of his residence, character, occupations, and of his son Edward. I cannot fix the time of the death of so near an ancestor, and I am a stranger to the name and family of his wife, my great-grandmother: perhaps you may assist or direct my enquiries. If, in the course of your friendly communications, the necessary labour of any extracts should be attended with some expense, it is needless to say that I shall repay it with thanks.

"Your correspondence will be highly useful and agreeable to me, but I shall be still more desirous of a personal interview. I know not whether business or amusement ever calls you

to London: but for the pleasure of seeing you I should cheerfully undertake a journey to Canterbury.

"I am with great regard, &c.

"EDWARD GIBBON."

"To Egerton Brydges, Esq.,
Denton Court, near Canterbury."

I was delighted with this letter: but I never saw Mr. Gibbon. He went down to Lord Spencer's at Althorp, and, returning to London, died in the following January.

It is a very unaccountable thing that Gibbon was so ignorant of the immediate branch of his family whence he sprung. They had been entered in the Visitation-Book of Kent by the heralds in 1663; but Mathew, the historian's great-grandfather, was then only about twenty-one years old. His elder half-brother Thomas was then married to a sister of Sir William Rooke, of Horton; their father Thomas survived till about 1684, being then more than eighty years old. He had married a third wife, and removed to Hartlip, near Sittingbourne, her property. He probably resigned the residence at West Cliff to his son Thomas. I can trace no descendants of Thomas, the son, beyond the end of that century; perhaps they fell into obscurity. I never heard any tradition of them. It would have been a

great pleasure to me to have talked to Mr. Gibbon on the subject. I did not suspect how near he was to his end, and fondly flattered myself that there was time before me. At the moment I received the letter my house was unroofed, and twenty or thirty workmen disturbing every apartment. I had so few near collateral relations on my father's side, that to renew our alliance with so eminent a man would have been tenfold gratifying. The first Lord Eliot's wife was doubly related to Gibbon, on his father's side, and his next of kin.

Probably these ten years, from 1793 to 1803, were among the least poetical of my life. He who is born with poetical faculties cannot be happy if he checks that turn of mind; his destiny is cast, and he must pursue it. If ever I attempted to graft a different character upon it, it lowered that without raising any other. And hence also comes the just subject for ridicule: — men are seldom ridiculous except when they go out of their own character; and when they do, they are always so. A poet may be a politician and statesman in its leading principles, not often perhaps in its details; for who had a more poetical mind than Burke?

It will be asked, who dares to pronounce himself a poet in modern times—unless a Byron, and two or three more? No doubt it is hazardous. If it had been a temporary or occasional fit of

writing verses I would not have ventured it; but when I find, by fixed and unalterable proofs, that my temperament and character of mind have been the same all my life, how can I be so cowardly as to hesitate? There are many laborious departments of literature which any common talent may execute, such as compilation, or matters of mere erudition; but all the toil and art in the world will not enable one to write genuine poetry. At least one-fourth of the fifty-two writers of verse included in Johnson's "Lives of the Poets" had no true poetical genius. I have examined this subject at various times of my life with the most severe impartiality; and have not a particle of doubt of the correctness of this assertion. Johnson pleaded in excuse that the choice was made by the booksellers. Many of those authors would not be read, or sell, now; — such as Pomfret, Hughes, Edmund Smith, Sheffield, Granville, Halifax, Sprat, Yalden, Stepney, Walsh, Duke, King, Mallet, Pitt, Roscommon, &c. Here are nearly a third. In none of these are any poetical images, or any poetical feelings. But if there happened to be good sense in them, correctly expressed, that was sufficient for Johnson:—he was a man who sought what he called practical wisdom.

Lovers of good poetry also equally seek truth; but they seek it in the higher walks of invention, because they are convinced that truth is best

illustrated by imagined examples, and by embodiments of abstract ideas. Johnson had not a mind of this sort; his fancy was not bright, and his imagination was sluggish. The Pope school had not, when those "Lives" were undertaken, entirely gone out: whenever the best of this class wandered into the fields of imagination, Johnson condemned or ridiculed him; witness Prior's beautiful "Henry and Emma." In no one instance has Johnson commended a work of high imagination, except by mere force and compulsion, as in the case of "Paradise Lost."

The appearance of Johnson's "Lives" damped my spirits,

> And froze the genial flowings of my soul;

their captiousness, their hardness, their awkward humour, their affected raillery, and capricious contempt, seemed like the burst of discordant sounds upon fairy dreams. If the splendour of Collins could not save him from such rudenesses, what, I thought, must inferior powers expect?

Authors born a few years later did not feel this; the bursting of all mental chains by the French Revolution set those who did not rise till the year 1789 free. Yet when this enfranchisement took place, it is strange that Johnson's "Lives" did not lose their reputation. Johnson's authority was still regarded, but it was totally inconsistent with the merit now sought and remun-

erated with fame. Not only imagination and invention, but a wild and unlimited extravagance became now the fashion. Authors lashed themselves up into eccentricities and frensies. Verisimilitude was abandoned, and what was most monstrous was thought the greatest proof of genius. But it was scarcely more desirable to have these abuses of the inventive faculty, than the cold ratiocination inculcated by Johnson: nor were the splendid but monotonous couplets of Darwin, describing scientifically "The Loves of the Plants," less fatiguing in a long poem.

Johnson had carried precision, correctness, and uniformity, too far: all sorts of irregular versification were now resorted to, till what was set forth as metrical had scarcely any metre in it. But among these were a few who took advantage of all the liberty without any of the licentiousness.

Among the numerous beautiful articles of poetical criticism in the "Edinburgh Review," I am not at all sure that I can trace any uniformity of principles or taste. Different poems are often commended or censured by opposite canons; as, for instance, Byron and Barry Cornwall, or Keats, or Leigh Hunt, or Crabbe. It would be well if every review at its commencement would lay down, abstractedly, its own principles and scale of merit in such an important department of literature as poetry: we might then judge both

of its impartiality and its skill of application of its own rules. The principles of poetry applied to Crabbe will not do if applied to Byron.

Byron's own taste in criticism was entirely capricious and contradictory: I may venture to say, that it appears to me to have been perverse. If he sincerely liked Pope's school, how could he write as he did? and what is more strange still, it is said that neither Shakspeare, nor Spenser, nor, perhaps, Milton, were favorites with him. He affected to admire most, among his contemporaries, those who were least like himself. His "Mysteries" were magnificent poems; they were suited to his mystical genius: but the greater portion of his dramas are *mediocre*.

He had great sagacity, great invention, and at the same time, which is rare, great memory; but not great acquired knowledge. His erudition was superficial, but his acquaintance with the English poets prodigious. This led him sometimes to borrow when he was not aware of it; but there is scarce any poet except Shakspeare in whom there are more original and more forcible passages.

Lord Byron could not undo, by his criticisms, the charms he displayed in his poetry; which is another proof that when authors write well, they do not write by rules.

It is said that a great genius gives the tone to the age in which he lives; but there is a mutual

action and re-action between him and the age. If Johnson had been living in Byron's time, I do not think he would have changed him: the poet had as severe critics to deal with as Johnson; but Byron, with all his originality, often falls into the manner of several contemporaries. Still, in all in which he is excellent, the manner is his own.

I did not much enjoy the change of system, by which it appeared to me that false tests of genius were set up. I had not only no faculty for those extravagant inventions of the day, but a disgust of them. There are ductile minds which, though they can admire chaste works of genius, can also be caught by factitious stimulants. At times I began to be shaken in my ideas of what the best poetry ought to be. The popular clamour must have some effect on the strongest minds; perhaps I wrote with less vigour, but I did not alter my style, sentiments, or imagery. I was careless, and addicted myself with less perseverance and energy to the expression of my thoughts: I do not very well love to look back on that time. Yet it was the age which ought, of all others, to have been the strongest;—from thirty to forty.

I had moments of hope, and transient dreams of ambition. I could not get into parliament without a great command of ready money, for all the open places were bought at an enormous

expense, and the electors always called forward the candidate who, they thought, had most money to spend, without regard to any other consideration. The united talents of Burke, Fox, and Pitt, would have been no recommendation. It was in these respects that what were called the *rotten* boroughs were practically useful.

Probably talents improve more in the bustle of society than in retirement; but does genius improve more in this state of irritation? There, on the contrary,

Its plumes are ruffled, and sometimes impair'd.

Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, Milton, mingled occasionally in public affairs or public life; but all their great works were written in retirement.

A practical familiarity with life teaches us to apply our knowledge with more adroitness; but it does not teach us abstract wisdom. The moral philosopher is often bewildered when he enters among the clamour of multitudes, and the collision of conflicting parties. Leisure and calmness are necessary to foster his contemplations.

Many things of that tempestuous period—for even in the woods and valleys of Denton it was tempestuous—have been swept away from my memory. I think it was in the year 1800 that my friend Stebbing Shaw visited me for some weeks at Denton; and I cannot now recollect that I ever saw him afterwards, though I pro-

bably did, in the springs of 1801 and 1802, in London. During a great part of 1802 and 1803 I was myself in London, and had a house in Gloucester Place, which I gave up at the commencement of 1804, as far as I can recollect. In December, 1803, Lady Brydges's father died; and we paid another visit in Berkshire and Hampshire, at Burfield, Ash, and Enshot.

The hostile resolution of the Lords on the peerage claim was received by our enemies with grins of extreme delight, and we were all made to feel it in various ways, by the countenances and addresses of those into whose company we entered. One noble lord, at whose house I paid a morning visit, and with whom I had been on something like confidential terms, never came into the room when he heard I was there. He was a man of the world, and took up things warmly when they went well: he had made a long and able speech for the claim, and then declined to vote. He has been dead many years: I never saw him afterwards, nor wished to see him. He had been a most successful, yet was not a happy man: Pitt and a rich marriage had lifted him from a mean birth to a high station and large estates. He was, with some other successful children of capricious Fortune, of a northern, though not Scotch, race.

Of the little reliance to be put on modern aris-

tocracy we had innumerable proofs. One of Mr. Pitt's peers introduced himself to the claimant, for the purpose of hearing from him every thing confidential which he could learn, and then went and reported back the whole to the agents of the fiercest opponents. The wife of a mitred dignitary, who had long known the family, paid visits to get out all the gossip, which no doubt she related to her brother, who, though he never once attended a committee, came down to vote against the claimant,—probably sent by a powerful house of intriguants, who in less than a century had raised themselves from mean and poor gentry into the highest offices, rank, and wealth of the state. Another peer, unfortunately of an old title and house, was met in the street the day after the Lords' Resolution, and, on mention of that event, cried, "Ah! I am very sorry I was not there, for I had promised to come down, and vote against it!"—though he had actually never been present even for a moment at a single hearing! This honourable peer's sister had been particularly intimate with one of the claimant's family. Another peer was brought by a *soi-disant* friend to meet the present writer at dinner several times, and pretended great cordiality and good intention towards the claim; but this noble lord was also among the voters in opposition, to the utter astonishment of us all. He had been

himself made a peer, but not by Pitt. There were, however, a noble few who, in spite of all intrigues, were

——— faithful among the faithless found.

I cannot think of those days without indignation and disgust: observers wondered how I bore it as I did. The truth is, that I had been so tormented about it for a number of years, and kept in such painful and provoking suspense, that any termination to the contest, however unfavorable, appeared to me at the moment to be preferable to a continuance of the same sufferings. My brother was always in such a fever and irritation that he would not give me a moment's rest; he was at my door from four in the morning till past midnight;—he even often called me out of my bed: and when he did not call me, he complained that he had been sitting for hours in my room below waiting for me. He had no firmness of mind, and could rely in nothing on himself: he was driven about like a feather by every breath, and calumny, and whisper; and I had such absurd misrepresentations to answer, that I often lost all patience.

I said to myself, when it was over, "Now my mind will be free for literature, and my own congenial pursuits!"—but when the first stun was over, and the first repose past, regrets revived and deepened upon me. To think that we had

been defeated in an object so dear to us, and our just pride so shamefully and ungenerously wounded, by an act of the most childish and unprompted indiscretion,—by a silly circular letter, to which there was no temptation,—was too intolerable. The myrmidons, who so relentlessly opposed us, openly and positively declared, in the excess of their triumph, that they could not have beat us but for that letter. The use made of it was to the highest degree adroit and ingenious: it was to frighten away every peer from voting, who had taken a friendly part in the claim; and it did so with a great majority. There was one peer who had just taken his seat a few days before the division, for whose vote I never could account, unless in this way: I believe he had been asked to attend by Mr. C. S. P.; and perhaps because he was so asked, his lordship, on hearing the violent tirade against what was called "Canvass," resolved to show his purity by voting against the claim. He could know nothing of the case.

CHAPTER XVII.

Copy of circular letter of Chandos claimant — What was its real character—What use was made of it by the opponents to the claim —Its effect upon the Lord Chancellor Eldon — How he used it on summing up the case—The letter was either harmless, or calculated to injure no one but the claimant — How it would have been used on a trial by jury — By whom it was written and sent—What occurred after it — Its disastrous effect on the claim — Disgust the necessary effect — The Lords jealous of the jurisdiction they claim on questions of peerage — How opposed by Lord Chief Justice Holt — Author's determination to appeal from the Resolution of the Lords' committee—The difficult situation in which he has been placed —Vexatious delays of committees—Prior's character of Lord Ellenborough, in his "Life of Burke"—Lord Chadworth—Bishops Cleaver and Randolph — Removal of the claimant's ancestors from Gloucestershire into Kent — Epitaph on Sir John Astley at Maidstone — Robert Bridges — Character of Lord Redesdale by himself.

CIRCULAR LETTER OF THE CLAIMANT OF THE CHANDOS BARONY.

"Wigmore Street,
"May 20, 1803.

"MY LORD,

"I HAVE the honour of apprising your Lordship that Thursday next, the 26th inst., is appointed for the final discussion of the com-

mittee of privileges upon my claim to the Chandos peerage; and I have been impelled to take this liberty that your Lordship might not, by any accidental omission of notice, be deprived of an opportunity of deciding upon a matter, not important merely to myself, but to the rights of your Lordship's house of parliament, and to the just prerogative of the Crown. I am not presuming to solicit any favour or partiality from your Lordship,—I address myself to your justice. I ask but for your Lordship's candid consideration of the evidence which is recorded in your proceedings, and will survive, for the information of posterity, when all the insinuations and prejudices that I have had to contend with shall be utterly forgotten. It is upon the truth of that evidence, my Lord, that I am anxious to rest my pretensions to character, and the unsullied honour of my family.

"I have the honour to be, my Lord,

"Your Lordship's, most respectfully,

"EDWARD TYMEWELL BRYDGES."

If this very silly letter had been addressed only to the supporters of the claim, it might have been construed to have been a canvass; but, being sent to every peer, it was surely the direct reverse. It was an appeal, though an injudicious appeal, to justice. There was no reason to suppose the opponents of the claim would omit to attend. They had shown themselves sufficiently on the

alert. But who ever before called on active enemies to come down and vote against himself? The utmost it seemed to say was this,—"Come down and hear, and then you must be convinced." But if there was any sting, there seemed to be something of a reproachful tone in it. It was so far from being unparliamentary, that a letter of notice, requesting attendance on particular motions, is constantly issued by the secretary of the Treasury to all the members supporting government; and here this notice, observe, is partial. Probably the same notice is sent to the Lords.

Four-and-twenty hours had not elapsed before the D— of N—— and his adherents gave out, "The claimant has overshot himself,—the victory is ours!" It was instantly announced that the duke meant to move that this circular letter was a breach of privilege. I do not recollect whether it was told exactly in what way his Grace meant to argue it, but it turned out that he put it in this way, "that it was an improper solicitation for favour, and that therefore every peer who had received the letter" (and mark that this was the whole House) "ought to resent it by voting against the claim." This was well calculated to catch the chancellor, Lord Eldon, who had always supported the claim; and it did catch him. It was his lordship's especial business to support the dignity and privileges of the house: the chan-

cellor therefore turned round upon the claimant, and took it up most angrily.

It became his lordship's business, immediately after this motion of the D— of N——, to sum up the whole case of the claimant in a very long and able speech, in which he recapitulated and argued upon the whole evidence. But this speech began and ended with a vehement tirade against the circular letter. Is it possible that any thing could have a more injurious tendency to the claimant's cause? It was calculated, in direct words, to drive away all the claimant's supporters; and it did, in fact, drive away at least three out of every four.

But one may appeal coolly to all the world whether this foolish letter had even the smallest particle of concern with the merits of the case; and, if not, how could it be doing justice to let it operate? If it drove away supporters, instead of driving away opponents, it added new ones: thus it operated unfavourably in a fourfold manner.

In a court of law, on a trial by a jury, this could not have occurred. The first duty and practice of a judge, in his charge to a jury, would have been to direct the jury to dismiss such a thing from their consideration, and to attend solely to the merits of the case. If a judge were not to do this, it would be a decisive ground for a new trial.

That this letter lost the claimant his peerage is a positive and undeniable fact. I happened to call on my brother, in Wigmore Street, the morning that these circulars were in the act of distribution. The table was loaded with them, and Mrs. B. was folding and directing them. I had no sooner sat down than she put one of them into my hand to read. Her eyes glistened,—"Is not that excellent?" she said; "what beautiful language! Charles wrote it!" I read, and turned pale, and trembled. "You are not surely about to send out such a letter as this! *Cui bono?* Why, it will only bring down our enemies." "Don't disturb yourself about that," she exclaimed; "your objections are useless; more than one half were sent away last night, and are already in the hands of the lords." I left the house and went on to Mr. Maxwell in Grosvenor Place, who saw the matter in the same light as I did. I then went home to Gloucester Place, and we all there were equally horrified.

The next day, or the day after, I was passing my brother's house in Wigmore Street, when I met Mr. Conrad Coulthurst, who had been chief clerk in Mr. Woodcock's office during the greater part of the claim. He said, "What have you been doing? You have ruined your cause! the D— of N—— is up in arms; the chancellor is up in arms. I have seen my friend Atkins, the herald, who tells me that your enemy Townsend,

the herald, cannot contain himself for delight. He says that the D— of N—— means to move that this letter is a breach of privilege, and that now he is sure of beating; whereas nothing that he could do before would have prevented your success." The same morning I saw my friend Abbott, (late Lord Tenterden,) who told me that he had met the chancellor, who exclaimed in almost the same words, "What have your friends been doing? they have ruined their cause: I can do no more for them."

By such an accident or indiscretion has an invaluable right been defeated. I repeat that such a thing could never have happened in a regular court of law, and therefore such a court of law is the only safe protection for a right of peerage inheritance; and a claimant is mad who does not insist upon it, since the law has given him the option. A committee of privileges is the most inconvenient tribunal in the world for the trial of contested facts.

If any one can be found so torpid in his mind and heart as not to have felt indignation and disgust at these things, he is of a very singular temperament, which ought to be rather the subject of shame than boast. "If an appeal to an enemy is to be made a charge against a claimant," as if he was endeavouring to gain a decision by favour, then what dependence is there on reason, or justice, or right? In a civilized country, which

boasts of its laws, let a fair trial be had. They who resort to such means to defeat a cause, cannot themselves believe in the justice of their opposition. He who insists upon irrelevant facts, and even reasons falsely upon those facts, cannot have any sense of honour and probity in him.

There are some optimists who endeavour to support the doctrine that one man's fate is nearly the same as another's; and that if one is exposed to this extraordinary sort of disappointment and defeat, any other will, probably, in the course of life, incur something equally provoking. But are, or are not, the events here related such as have often happened, or are likely to happen again? If they are rare, then has not one cause for complaint and spleen? It may be said, that in all human affairs justice will occasionally be imperfectly done. Well; but let it then at least be done in a regular way, and by "due processes of law." If those methods fail to obtain justice, human nature must submit; not when the precautions and securities, to which a British subject is by the constitution entitled, have been unattended to, or set at defiance.

The Lords have always been so jealous of this, which they assume to be their jurisdiction, that all attempts at an appeal from them have hitherto met with all sorts of obstacles thrown in the way of the appellant. When Lord Holt overturned their resolution in the Banbury case, in 1695,

they were very indignant, and endeavoured to call the magnanimous chief-justice to account; but with all their power as a body they failed, and were obliged to gainsay or shrink back from their menaces and big words. But every ministry since that time has exercised every sort of adroitness to prevent the flame of this contest between the Lords and the courts of law being revived. I have had many years' correspondence with the secretary of state; but the question has always been evaded, for there has been no attempt to deny Lord Holt's law; and that law was recognised officially by the attorney-general, Sir Vicary Gibbs, in 1808.

From the moment that I took all the steps in my power to appeal against this resolution of the Lords, I put an end to any force which, by inference, it might have; legal effect it had none at any time. I rested without taking any positive steps till January, 1822. But this delay could in no degree weaken my right. Indeed no delay or act on my part could alter any right of peerage which, by inheritance, was in me, even if I had in the most formal manner surrendered all claims. And this is a decisive reason why no indiscretion of my brother, by sending the circular letter, could by law in any degree affect his right to the peerage; therefore the Lords' resolution, being admitted to have been brought about by that letter, was directly contrary to the law.

A man thus situated had a difficult character to support. All that had any means of doing it would, directly or indirectly, trample upon him. The natural envy and jealousy of mankind delight in detraction where they have any colour for it. So far, therefore, were my pretensions of any advantage to me while I was in this equivocal state, that they provoked efforts to insult and humiliate me.

The delays that took place during the progress of the investigation before the Lords had been found to be attended with all sorts of inconveniences. It gave time for the most absurd prejudices to be propagated, and even invented. A committee, formed of members who sometimes attended and sometimes did not, and at all times mixed with public gossip, could not be in a state to come to proper conclusions. Many of the peers who voted had been lately created, after the case had been going on ten or twelve years. Thus Lord Ellenborough, of whom Prior, in his "Life of Burke," (vol. II. p. 479.) gives the following character:

"An epigram, said to be written by the late Lord Ellenborough, then one of Warren Hastings's counsel, and the idea of which, though not acknowledged, is borrowed from Mr. Burke himself, in a passage of the letter to Lord Kenmure, was delivered to him in a letter just before opening one of the charges, in order that the

story might discompose him in the discharge of this duty; but he calmly conveyed it to his pocket without farther notice. It is remarkable, the reputed author of this, after being repeatedly reprimanded on the trial for his violence of language, lived to exhibit in the judgment-seat (where, above all other places, it is the least excusable) the same violence and the same irritability which he had censured in Mr. Burke, for whom, as an accuser at the Bar, there was some apology, in addition to a proud and domineering spirit and conduct, which Mr. Burke never displayed in any station."

Another of those who voted against the claim was the celebrated, or rather *dis-celebrated*, Lord Chedworth, whose motives were unknown to all but himself, for he neither spoke to others, nor was spoken to; nor have I any recollection of his ever having attended above once or twice. It was often difficult to form committees, and very frequently there were not more than the necessary number of five. There were two bishops among the voters,— Cleaver and Randolph, — both of whom had been promoted to the mitre by a certain noble family to whom they had been tutors. This was a very unkind and unexpected cut; for he was, I believe, remotely related to the claimant; and his grandfather, who was recorder of Canterbury, was an intimate friend of the claimant's grandfather. He would probably have set up as

an excuse, — such as it was, — that he was left no choice. I am confident that he never once attended any committee, and could know nothing of the case.

It was ridiculously asked, what brought a branch of the Chandos family out of Gloucestershire into so remote a county as Kent? Do not younger branches often emigrate? But here was a reason offered by a notorious and recorded fact: a distinguished and powerful alliance by marriage. On a noble monument in Maidstone church is the following

EPITAPH.

" Death hath added to the ornaments of this " place the blessed memorials of the most accom- " plished gentleman by virtue and parts, Sir John " Astley, Knight, only sonne and heire of John " Astley, Esq., Master of the Jewels, &c., who " from his tender years attended on Queen Eli- " zabeth in her honourable Band of Pensioners, " and was Master of the Revels to King James " and King Charles. *He married Katherine* " *Bridges, daughter of Anthony Bridges, brother to* " *the Lord Edmond Bridges, Baron Shandois of* " *Sudeley Castle;* by whom having had issue " diverse children, they all dyed before him; " so that, in the disposition of his lands, he affec- " tionately acknowledged both his name and his " nephews, and left the care of his other be-

"quests in his will to William Harrison, Gent.,
"the Queen's Attorney in her Court of Common
"Pleas, his executor; who, out of due regard to
"the performance thereof, and pious respect to
"the memory of his honourable friend, hath con-
"structed this monument.

"Obiit 26 die Januarii, 1639."

This marriage, no doubt, brought Lady Astley's brother, Robert Bridges, to Maidstone, where he died, and was buried in 1636. Mr. Francis Townsend chose to doubt his identity without a shadow of ground for it. Robert Bridges, though called "Esquire," inherited no patrimony. His father had been very slenderly provided for by the will of his father, the first peer. Katherine had, no doubt, been brought up in Queen Elizabeth's court, where she made this alliance with Astley, whose mother was a Grey as well as her grandmother. Her own mother was a Fortescue, of Faulkbourn Hall in Essex, related to Queen Elizabeth by the Boleynes. It is probable that Robert Bridges was a sportsman, for I find an action of *clausum fregit* brought against him, not long before his death, by Filmer of Sutton Valence, the ancestor of Sir Edmund Filmer.

Lord Redesdale endeavoured to invent a new construction of the law with regard to traditional evidence, but it failed. This reminds one of the

character this noble lord most unjustly gave, in his argument on the Banbury case, of the great Sir Edward Coke, which did not suit Sir Edward, but exactly suited himself.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Removal of the author to his son's house at Lee Priory — Author elected M. P. for Maidstone — He had not the courage to speak often—His poor-law bill—Tactics of the House—A bad speaker is wearisome — Author's literary pursuits not intermitted — Copyright act—Lord Byron's sudden burst into fame—The effects on him — His residence on the Continent — Author in his travels on the Continent went over the same ground — His return to England — The effects on his health — His return to the Continent — His literary employments there — Lex Terræ — Gardner case and Lisle claim — Banbury case — Recapitulation of that case — Lord Holt's reasonings — Endeavour made by Lords Redesdale and Ellenborough to overset Lord Holt's decision — Character of their arguments — A judgment unappealed from is as binding as a statute— Wonder that these noble Lords could venture such weak arguments.

In October, 1810, I removed to my son's house at Lee Priory, in the parish of Ickham, four miles from Canterbury, he having then come of age. Two years afterwards I was elected M. P. for Maidstone after a severe contest, thinking the right of peerage did not seclude me from a seat in the Lower House while a writ of summons to the Upper House was denied me. I was now on the verge of fifty years, when men can rarely hope to attain for the first time the powers

of oratory. My natural shyness and timidity were overcome with so much difficulty that I seldom spoke, but hundreds of times sat with a palpitating heart till I lost my turn, and let others in succession rise before me till it was too late. But, altogether, I have no reason to complain of the treatment I received in the House.

In 1814 I introduced a bill for the amendment of the poor laws, especially the settlement law; but the manufacturing towns were too strong for me, because they did not choose to be burdened with their own poor labourers when they could no longer work; but were resolved still to throw them back on the agricultural parishes which gave them birth. I fought a long while, but the table was covered with petitions against my bill. I had the support of Romilly, Whitbread, Sir Francis Burdett, and other Whig and patriotic members.

But the tactics of the House of Commons depend upon party combinations. No one can carry business through by his own sole power, because he cannot get attendances. The greater part of members are too lazy to be present at what they are not forced to wait upon; and this no individual can, merely as an individual, command. He can only be carried on by the tide of faction.

It was often wearisome to hear the dull ill-expressed speeches of unintellectual men, and, on these occasions, I was too apt to get on one of the

back seats and go to sleep. The attendance on these occasions, often till four in the morning, required both health and patience, when at the close one had a long walk to the upper part of the town. It is said that many may have good judgments who cannot explain themselves; and it is well known that ministers want a vote rather than a speech.

During this parliament of six years—1812 to 1818,—I did not give up my literary pursuits. I collected together and published the matter of the "Restituta," in four volumes, which is copious in the revival of old English literature, and I edited many things from the private press of Lee Priory; and wrote the "Sylvan Wanderer," a set of moral essays; a poem called "Bertram," and several pamphlets on the poor laws and copyright act. But I had not much leisure for calm thought, and the pressure of my private affairs added to the distraction of my mind. I reflected, however, with long and persevering anxiety on the poor laws, and came to those conclusions which every future year of discussion has confirmed. I found many obstinate theorists in the House who had crotchets of their own; and there was no subject on which members were more conceited, or affected to be more wise.

I made strenuous efforts to amend the cruel burdens of the copyright act, and had advanced some way through an organized opposition, when the dissolution of parliament, in June, 1818, put

an end to farther proceedings, and undid all which had been done.

The spring of the year I came into parliament Lord Byron's genius began to blaze upon the world. The first canto of "Childe Harold" was published early in 1812. I was then in London, and well remember the sensation it made. I walked down Bond Street the morning of its publication, and saw it in the windows of all the booksellers' shops. I entered a shop and read a few stanzas, and was not surprised to find something extraordinary in them, because I myself had anticipated much from his "Hours of Idleness." Lord Nugent's "Portugal" was published the same day, but had a very different reception; yet at that time Lord Nugent was considered to be of a much more flourishing family, and moving in a much higher sphere: so that the public does not always judge by mere fashion. Two or three of the poems which followed did not seem to me equally to deserve praise,—such as the "Giaour,"—because they were more factitious; but they were still more highly relished by the fashionable world, now prepared to admire whatever came from the pen of this great, but eccentric, genius.

The affair of this mighty fame was an affair of a day,—nay, of an hour,—a minute! The train was laid; it caught fire, and it blazed. If it

had missed fire at first, I doubt if there would have been a second chance. It began at noon; before night the flame was strong enough to be everlasting. Did it contribute to his happiness? I believe it did: it went a great way towards his occasional purification; if it had not burst out, it would have burnt sullenly within and consumed him. The triumph at home was, no doubt, transitory; it was scarcely more than three short years, — 1813, 1814, 1815. But then came Switzerland, and Italy, and Greece. There he had periods of darkness: but also how much splendor! None of these would have been lighted but for that propitious day of the spring of 1812, which set fire to the train of his genius in London. He died in the heat of the glory in which he lived; but would he not have died as soon from sullen gloom?

Poets must live the lives of poets, or they will have no true fire. During these last eight years of Byron's life he must have had innumerable glorious visions. His spirit always haunts me on the lake of Geneva; and I behold him for ever floating on its waves in all the shadowy brilliance of his imaginations, or like Manfred hovering over the precipices of the Alps! I behold him at Venice, at Ravenna, at Ferrara, at Florence, at Rome, and at Pisa; and I see him enter the soul of Dante, and wander with him in his exile among

the sombre woods, where the melancholy and mysterious Poet wrote his sublime secrets of hell, purgatory, and paradise.

There are many who will ask whether all the intense feelings expressed by Byron in these places were not factitious extravagancies in which he was not sincere, and which his life belied: I say, sternly, no! it is a mean and stupid mind which can suspect so; no one can feign such intensities as Byron expresses: when he wrote, he was sincere, but his feelings were capricious, and not always the same. If it can be contended that inconsistency destroys merit, wo be to human frailty!

I have beheld from a distance the site of Arqua among the Euganean Hills, and thought I saw the form of Petrarch in the clouds hovering over them. Byron came nearer to Dante than to Petrarch, than whom he was more vehement, and whose gentle and melodious sweetness, and tender melancholy, he has never fallen into. Dante was a greater genius than Petrarch, but still he who denies that Petrarch's genius was very beautiful and very brilliant, must have a frozen temperament and a most inapprehensive brain. The spirit of Petrarch's poetry breathes so much inspiration that it cannot be lost in any translation. But we have nothing at all like it in our English poetry.

I rejoice that I have visited almost all these

scenes; but there are many deductions from the pleasures afforded by a long residence on the remote and most picturesque parts of the Continent. The distance of communication, the forgetfulness of friends, the advantages taken by the dishonesties of agents, the difficulty of intercourse with domestic literature, the loss of all interest in the state, or in society at home; the opportunities given to enemies to spend their calumnies without fear of being refuted,—all these are grave mischiefs. Who will pay any attention to the interests of an absent man? The *obliviscendus* soon becomes a fixture almost irremoveable. I have been in England for only twenty-eight months since June, 1818, viz. from June, 1826, to October, 1828; and my spirits were so low during that time that I could not bring myself to visit my most intimate friends in London or elsewhere. I know not what there was in the air of England, but I found it so heavy that it destroyed my health. The "comfortless despair" that I then felt was more frightful even than eloquent poets have described,—

> And forms of woe, as evening's veil appear'd,
> More horrible and huge their giant shadows rear'd.

I could find no enjoyment in any thing; I could not write; I could not read a page of a book; I could not take exercise; I could not enjoy the air; I could not dictate a common note. It was,

no doubt, bodily disease. I was in a stupor, but it was not an insensible stupor; it was full of pain. It is not necessary to describe the diseased phantoms of the brain. I came abroad again, but I have ever since felt the sad effects of so inconvenient and destructive a distance from England. But *sic fata volunt!* I have partly recovered my fortitude and my patience. My life has been now nearly twice the length of Byron's.

I have since passed my time not altogether idly;—I have written many things; with what success others must judge. "The Lake of Geneva," in seven books, 1831, is my principal poem. It consists of about 6400 lines in blank verse, written in May and June, 1831. Very few copies have reached England, where I understand all poetry is now out of fashion. I am content to wait, and to let this memorial of my feelings speak for me when I am dead.

I also wrote a series of letters during the time the Parliamentary Reform Bill was going on, which I called "Expositions" on that subject. I do not say that that Bill has worked quite so well as I had hoped that it would. Some things I have also written for the public journals, which my friends have been pleased to speak well of.

While my health will allow my mind to work at all, I work strenuously; and the more I work, the less unhappy I am.

In 1830 and 1831 I printed for private use a thick octavo volume on the question of the jurisdiction of the Lords over peerage-rights of inheritance, which I entitled "Lex Terræ." In the progress of this compilation I obtained from England two most interesting works, then lately published, which furnished me with very important additional matter. These were Le Marchant's "Report of the Gardner Case," (which contained a full and authentic report of the proceedings of the last claim to the Banbury peerage, upon the report of the Attorney-General Gibbs, in 1808,) and Sir Harris Nicolas's "Report of Sir John Sydney's Claim to the Barony of Lisle;" both of which are full of peerage-law of the most valuable kind.

My own volume is mixed with a great deal of miscellaneous matter, which I was desirous thus to preserve for the remembrance of my posterity; and, among the rest, with much poetry, for which I had then no other place. But, on recurring to the argumentative parts on the law question, I am confident they cannot be refuted. The speeches of Lords Redesdale and Ellenborough on the Banbury claim are such as one could not have supposed it possible could have come from two judicial peers, pronouncing, what they themselves called, a judgment before a committee, which they deemed to be a court of judicature. Their object was to establish two points: 1. That

the judgment of Lord Chief Justice Holt and the Court of King's Bench, in 1695, in the case of the King and Knowlys, otherwise Lord Banbury, was wrong: 2. That the law which had hitherto obtained with regard to children born in wedlock, where it was strongly suspected that they were the issue of an adulterous intercourse of the mother, was wrong.

I will shortly recapitulate the nature of the first of these two cases: Lord Banbury had killed his brother-in-law, Lawson, in a duel, and was indicted for it at the sessions; which indictment was removed by *certiorari* to the King's Bench. There he was indicted as a commoner by the name of Knowlys. He pleaded in abatement that he was Earl of Banbury, and produced in court the patent of creation, and stated his pedigree, which he offered to prove. The attorney-general replied that the plea was false, and that he was not Earl of Banbury, for that the House of Lords had, on his petition to be tried by his peers, resolved and adjudged that he had no right to the earldom of Banbury. To this he rejoined, that the resolution of the Lords was not a legal judgment, and insisted on his plea with a *hoc paratus est verificare*, to which the attorney-general persisted to demur; and the court, after long and solemn argument, adjudged the plea in abatement to be good; and that the resolution of the Lords was no judgment. The Lords were

outrageously offended at this, and used many menaces towards Lord Chief Justice Holt, and even summoned him before them; all which Holt, with a glorious magnanimity in the discharge of his constitutional duty, set at nought, telling the Lords that if his judgment was wrong a writ of error might be brought. But no error was brought, which showed that the judgment stood upon such solid grounds that it was unassailable.

Lord Holt and his brother judges gave various reasons why the resolution of the Lords was invalid and void, — principally that it was no judgment, nor made by due process of law; and that the inheritance of a peerage is as much under the protection of the common law as any other right of inheritance, and that the Lords had gone out of their way in taking upon themselves to decide the right to the earldom. The attorney-general, Sir Vicary Gibbs, accordingly reported that he was bound by the high authority of Lord Holt's decision.

Lords Redesdale and Ellenborough took on themselves to endeavour to overset and censure this report of the Attorney-General Gibbs, and in unqualified terms to argue that Lord Holt's decision was wrong.

It was a dangerous thing in Lord Ellenborough to endeavour to set the law of the court, in which he himself presided, afloat, after it had been so solemnly settled, without appeal, for more than

one hundred and fifteen years. He might as well have refused the authority of one of the statutes of the realm. But if he did make such a bold attempt, his lordship ought at least to have coloured it by using some plausible argument.

But what does his lordship do? He takes no notice of any one of the arguments used by Lord Holt as the ground of his decision, but merely lays down a dictum that, in his opinion, Lord Holt's decision was wrong; and adds, that his Lordship had peculiar notions about jurisdiction. Why, if the chief justice's notions were peculiar, how came the other judges to concur with him, and why was not a writ of error brought? And then he contradicts himself by first saying that the Lords' resolution was final, and a frail "judgment" too, so he calls it; and afterwards he adds that it was not final. If he thought the former resolution final, why did he open the case anew and go over the whole again?

As to Lord Redesdale's arguments, they are so unintelligible, so full of contradictory sophistries, and so suicidal, that the reader would be wearied and disgusted were I to attempt to expound them in this place. He seemed to be in the habit of taking each crotchet of his mind separately, without the smallest regard to consistency with those which preceded and followed it. He never appeared capable of combining parts into an uni-

form whole: all his mind was broken into exilities.

Lord Holt's objection was, that the Lords had taken upon themselves to decide a question which they had no authority to decide; and he showed that they could have no authority, chiefly for the following reasons: 1. That Magna Charta and a series of confirmatory statutes had enacted that no one should be disseised of his freehold unless *per legem terræ aut judicium parvum suorum*, that is, "due process of law, or trial by jury." 2. That a Lords' Committee of Privileges was not a court of judicature, and could pronounce no judgment. 3. That the House of Lords itself was no other than the court of parliament, and as such was only a court of appeal, and had no original jurisdiction; and a mere Committee of Privileges of the Lords was no court at all, unless it might be called a court for their own privileges. 4. That if a suitor was exposed to have his rights adjudged by such a tribunal, he would be ousted of the benefit of appeal. 5. That the case which the Lords here undertook to adjudge was not before them, for the petitioner's prayer was that he might be tried by his peers; and in this petition he assumed himself to be a peer; which assumption, if the Lords denied, they should have sent it back to the proper authorities to be by them decided.

Now, is a solemn judgment of more than a century back to be overturned by a *dictum* of two lords in committee, without an attempt to answer any one of the grounds on which that judgment was pronounced, or even to take any notice of them?

I am at a loss to guess how any law peer, in the exercise of that which he himself insisted to be a judicial act, could so far forget himself as to let it go forth to the world that he had ventured as far as in him lay to overturn a solemn decision of his predecessors, made with the extraordinary learning and force of argument which distinguished Lord Holt's judgment in this case. Magna Charta could not be denied—the construction of that part of Magna Charta on which this case turned could not be denied. If so, it followed that a Lords' Committee of Privileges had no jurisdiction over this case, unless it could demonstrate itself to be a legal court of judicature; and that it is not a legal court of judicature, is a truism too obvious to be argued.

CHAPTER XIX.

Le Marchant's "Report of the Banbury Case"—Whose son really was Lord Banbury's ancestor?—Mother's indiscretion cannot bastardise her issue—Trial at law—Lord Hardwicke's opinion as to a reference to a Lords' committee—Crown not bound so to refer—Nature of Sir John Sydney's claim to the Barony of Lisle—What is the law of baronies by writ—Abergavenny case in Coke's "Reports"—Lord Redesdale's attempt to overset it—Sir Anthony Hart's quick refutations of this attempt—Astonishment at such a mode of conducting trials—Long oppositions to the law advocated by the author on this subject—Author engages deeply in whatever he undertakes—The value of Boswell's "Life of Johnson" lies in opinions and sentiments—Regret that so little is known of many other celebrated authors—Author's life bare of incidents—Never mixed with party, or the butterflies of the day—Depends on thought and sentiment—Records of the secrets of the mind curious—What can those who have lived in the full tide of life tell?—How far are material objects necessary?—Sir William Temple—Sonnet on Sir William Temple's seat at Moor Park—Swift's intellectual character—"Gulliver's Travels"—Temple's character—Official talents how far technical—A false aristocracy worse than none—Autobiographies of great men—A secluded life may afford subjects for memoirs—Autobiographies of Somers, Bolinbroke, Harley, Pulteney, Chatham, Burke, Fox, would be inestimable—Chesterfield's characters—The present age less brilliant than the past—Rousseau and Voltaire—Sir Philip Sidney—Sonnet on Penshurst—Lord Brook's "Life of Sidney"—Lord Buckhurst.

THE report of the Banbury case, given by Le Marchant, must be taken to be exact, because

Lords Redesdale and Eldon corrected their own arguments. The speeches of Lord Erskine and Sir Samuel Romilly were full of matter, argument, and eloquence, on the other side.

Whether Lord Banbury was or was not in fact the issue of an adulterous intercourse between the Countess of Banbury and Lord Vaux, is, according to the ancient law of the land, an irrelevant question, so long as the issue was born in wedlock, without separation on the part of the husband. Certainly the conduct of the countess in concealing this issue till after the earl's death betrayed a consciousness of guilt. But any indiscreet conduct of this kind cannot bastardise her issue by the ancient laws of England. At any rate, if the old law was to be overturned, it should have been effected in a regular court of law, by a judge and jury. The question of bastard or no bastard was a question of fact triable by a jury; and then there might have been an appeal, or motion for a new trial, or writ of error. The committee took upon themselves to determine that the claimant's ancestor was a bastard! But with all their might Lords Redesdale and Ellenborough did not succeed in establishing that a Lords' Committee of Privileges was a court of judicature, capable of pronouncing binding judgments. Whether it would have been expedient for the claimant still to have demanded a trial at law was another question: he had assuredly a legal right to do so.

It seems that Lord Hardwicke, when attorney-general, had given an opinion that the Crown was not bound to refer the question again to the Lords, but that it was optional on its part. And upon this the opposing Lords endeavoured to found an argument that the old resolution of 1695, which Lord Holt decided to be invalid, was final! One does not know how sufficiently to express one's astonishment at such an inference. When the Crown refers a question of peerage to a Committee of Privileges, it is merely to ask their opinion. It is not a part of the duty of the Crown to do so—nor is the Crown under any obligation to follow their advice. "Then," said the opponents, "if the Crown is not compellable to refer the question to them anew, the former resolution must be binding."—What a *non sequitur!*—"No," says the Constitution; "by the laws of England there is no wrong without a remedy. The Crown is not bound to refer again to the Lords; but the Crown is bound to grant the *soit droit fait* as a *debitum justitiæ.*"

In the case of Sir John Sydney's claim to the barony of Lisle, Lord Redesdale again became a virulent opponent, and, instead of expounding the law, he did what he unjustly accused Sir Edward Coke of doing—he *made* it! He endeavoured to draw an arbitrary line as to the time before which he contended (say 10 Richard II.) that writs combined with proof of sitting did not create a de-

scendible peerage; and this line happened to be exactly so drawn as to exclude the barony of Lisle. The law had hitherto been laid down on this subject for more than two centuries without question, and especially in the Abergavenny case in Sir Edward Coke's famous "Reports." This report being in Lord Redesdale's way, he went the length of accusing the learned and illustrious chief justice of having *invented* the case, though the judgment had been given in concurrence with the Lord Keeper and other judges!! Sir Anthony Hart, the claimant's counsel, was quite ready, with extraordinary quickness, to meet the noble lord at every winding, and to turn him on his back. By a fortunate course, for which there is no easy mode of accounting, unless by the Duke of Northumberland's patronage, this lucky peer had had the doors of the Lords' House opened to him, and now was willing to keep the door shut to all others. With such a confusion of reasoning as the nature of his faculties involved him in, it is strange how he could carry himself through such a career.

Nothing less than the near inspection I have had of these things could have induced me to believe that things could be carried on in this way upon the open stage of great affairs. I thought that there had been something of peculiar hardship in the opposition to my brother's claim: both the volumes of Le Marchant and Sir Harris

Nicolas prove that others also have come in for their share of severe treatment. Companions in distress are, it must be admitted, some consolation. It shows that irregular tribunals are a tremendous mischief;—and that there is no protection but in the common law.

In developing these things I have had every one for many years against me, till at last the combination of authorities and arguments has been such that no one has any longer dared to contradict me. The practising lawyers are very little acquainted with this part of the law; and have often stared when I first began to utter these opinions, and explain these things to them.

When I engage in an inquiry I do not take it up lightly and dismiss it lightly; I endeavour to go to the bottom of it, and pursue it *toto corde*. I turn it in every point of view, and extend my researches as long as there is any chance of new matter. I come back to it again and again at short intervals, and yet give myself time to recover from any false and heated colouring which a momentary novelty of suggestion may cause. Twelve years have now elapsed since I have been revolving the doctrines here advocated. At first they appeared so contrary to the general impression that I suspected my own judgment. Now I stand upon a rock, and no one can move me.

If I am entitled to say any thing of my own life, I am entitled to record these opinions and

feelings. To relate bare facts without comments or sentiments is to teach nothing. What is the value of Boswell's "Life of Johnson?" The record of opinions and sentiments, the events of the great moralist's life were nothing. What do we know of Gray? We should have known nothing but for his private letters, which have been preserved. Of Collins we know scarce any thing but what his "Poems" tell us. A great many persons pass through life with only the impressions from outward objects, which act upon them while those objects are present. Such persons are incapable of relating any thing but facts, and those facts only from memory.

My own life has, I must confess, been somewhat bare of incidents;—it has been a life of contemplation and anxious thought. But I have incurred as many sufferings as the shipwrecked mariner, and have had a thousand hair-breadth escapes. I have fought no battles, been lifted on no wave of triumph, and performed no public services—I have led no senate; been the favourite of no political party, and the clamoured darling of no mob. I have never mingled myself with the butterflies of the day, to gather their gossip, and reflect their gaudy colours as they

> —— lightly o'er the current skim,
> And show their gaily gilded trim,
> Quick-glancing to the sun.

I have no anecdotes to tell of political secrets and private history, like the amusing "Letters of Horace Walpole;" nor have I the piquant whispers to divulge, by which we think we see public characters in a new light,—by which the delusions of a false glory are dispelled.

Lonely, grave, shy, melancholy, indignant, I have no hope to interest but by profound sentiment, or giving a picture of the workings of a lacerated heart. Are we to hear no tales but of those whom vulgar marvel calls the great? It is commonly a coarse spirit which can work itself into vulgar greatness. The finer sensibilities for the most part seek retreat;—and are they of no importance if they do not live in the bustle of the high tide of life? Is there no sagacity but in experience and the daily collision of society?

The secrets of the mind are among the primary classes of human knowledge. We may go occasionally into the world; but in seclusion alone we have time and opportunity to think deeply. Yet readers call out for facts, and not for shadowy notions; and perhaps they say that he who has not many facts to tell had better abandon the task of memoirs, since he can have nothing worth memorializing. But to be perpetually among talkers who talk ill, is only to have one's understanding confounded;—a succession of facts untruly related, and untruly observed upon.

Let us suppose the case of one who has lived all his days in the heart of public action and in great offices; and let us suppose him to be a man of very strong native abilities, most assiduously cultivated. Is this a man whose memoirs would be filled with high and interesting matter? Such men have no time to write, or habits of writing. Lord Clarendon was an exception; for he wrote facts and characters, of which the instruction as well as pleasure is inexhaustible. But sometimes we want to fly from the busy scenes even of Lord Clarendon into more visionary and refined regions. Poets must dwell on poetical subjects, and treat those subjects with a poetical feeling.

It may be said that he must have some material objects to fasten those airy dreams upon, as, when Sir William Temple, after the fatigues of a public life, retired to the tranquil retreat of Moor Park, near Farnham, in Surrey. Among my early "Poems"—but not in the first edition—is the following

SONNET ON MOOR PARK,

Formerly the seat of Sir WILLIAM TEMPLE, whose heart was buried in the garden there.

To yonder narrow vale, whose high-sloped sides
Are hung with airy oaks, and umbrage deep—
Where through thick shades the lulling waters creep,
And no vile noise the musing mind derides,
But silence with calm solitude abides—
TEMPLE with joy retired, that he might keep
A course of quiet days, and nightly sleep
Beneath the covering wings of heavenly guides—

Virtue and Peace!—Here he in sweet repose
Sigh'd his last breath!—Here SWIFT, in youth reclined,
Pass'd his smooth days.—O, had he longer chose
Retreats so pure, perchance his nicer mind
That the world's wildering follies, and its woes
To madness shook, had ne'er with sorrows pined!

Temple was a man of deserved fame, but not like Clarendon. It is more difficult to determine the real merits of Swift: he was a strange compound; he had copious and original invention, but it was the invention of spleen. He saw acutely, but he saw the bad parts of mankind: he therefore wanted one essential of a poet: he saw neither the sublime nor the beautiful; but it must be admitted that he saw the comic; yet it was the comic of anger: it was

—— moody madness, laughing wild
Amid severest woe!

When I was a child scarce any book delighted me more than "Gulliver's Travels;" I have never read it since. I suppose that the charm was in the wonders that it related. Swift's style is plain, and without simile or metaphor, which is a great merit; no author whose power is in the original thought resorts to simile or metaphor. Temple was ingenious, but he was often diluted, and therefore feeble. There was generally a mixture of the statesman and the courtier about him, and these corrupt and falsify the mind. In carrying on human affairs there is a constant resort to trick

and duplicity: to suppose that any mind should come entirely pure out of such habitual intercourse is absurd. Did ever any one go into the midst of a fire without being scorched?

A vast proportion of official talents is technical and factitious. We see men do well in office, who, when the aids of office are gone, become mute ciphers. Even Pitt himself fell fathoms deep when the aids of office were gone. This is a proof of the want of genius and imagination. We have great men now who give themselves the most insulting and insufferable airs from the station and wealth into which the corruption and base intrigues of their immediate ancestors have placed them, but who never have up to this moment produced one instance of positive talent or virtue. These have none of the claims to superiority which can justify or palliate aristocratical influence. Better that there should be no aristocracy than that such men should have dominion. Great families, though they have many obscure periods in a course of generations, yet always break out at intervals and show their brilliant lights. Men may by their own personal merits be entitled to obtain the highest rank; but they who have neither personal merit, nor ancient nobility of distinction, are not to be endured. I cannot see why men should be rewarded for robbing the public purse. But what if into the bargain their evil counsels have gone far to ruin the glory and prosperity of the nation?

Have distinguished men justified by their autobiographies the favourable opinion previously entertained of them?—They have had the opportunity of representing their actions and motives to their own advantage; but a sagacious reader will readily perceive whether they are at ease with themselves. The difference between sincerity and disguise cannot well be confounded: and the actions which have appeared plausible often lose their credit when inadequate reasons are given for them. But nice distinctions, acute arguments, and noble or tender sentiments, will exhibit proofs of genius or talent which cannot deceive.

There is nothing more vulgar or contemptible than the opinion that they only who have lived in the heat of action can afford proper materials for memoirs. A by-stander often sees most. Actors are often carried on by the tide, and know not whither they are going, nor how they are borne up. They are impelled forward without any merit or demerit of their own, and float away unconsciously, surrendering themselves to the force of the waves.

They who live in the regions of thought are only fit to give profound and instructive memoirs. A busy narrative without reflection may please for a moment, but loses all interest the moment the novelty is gone. If we could have had the frank memorials and confessions from their own pens of such men as Somers, Bolinbroke, Harley,

Pulteney, Chatham, Burke, Fox, they would have been inestimable treasures. Chesterfield has given us the characters of some of his contemporaries, which are very amusing; but not, I think, very profound. As the noble lord was a factitious character, without heart, he never can be trusted.

The *laudator temporis acti* is deemed a being of prejudice; but surely we are now fallen upon very dark days among public men. Even as late as the parliament in which I sat there were many brilliant or powerful men, almost all of whom are now gone, except Peel, who did not then take the leading and able part which he has since taken; but whose talents for business and always intelligent speeches one cannot deny, even when one least agrees with him. Stanley was not then in parliament, and probably was not of age.

But it is not the business of a self-memorialist merely to give the characters of others, which he has had an opportunity of observing. To apply a mirror to his own heart is his first business. What strange stories of himself Rousseau has told us, which no other could have told or guessed! Some of them are perhaps the mere delusions of his own morbid and diseased imagination. I cannot bring myself to believe that they are wilful falsehoods; because I will not allow myself to admit that one of such tenderness or such eloquence could be a

bad man. Of Voltaire I can believe any thing, because he wanted the spring of all good;—he had not a particle of heart. This deficiency is felt in all his writings; and, to my taste, takes away all interest from them.

Should we not be delighted if we could hear from Sir Philip Sidney in his own words an account of the fears, the hopes, and the mortifications of his short but glorious life?—his private affections, his humours, the clouds and the sunshine of his temper, his frank opinions of his contemporaries, his reflections, his regrets, and those shadows of a contemplative melancholy, of which it is said he so strongly displayed the dominion over him from childhood? About the year 1795 I wrote the following

SONNET,

ON VISITING PENSHURST.

Behold thy triumphs, Time! what silence reigns
Along these lofty and majestic walls!
Ah, where are regal Sidney's * pompous trains?
Where Philip's † tuneful lyre, whose dying falls
Could melt the yielding nymphs and lovesick swains?
Ah! where th' undaunted figure that appals
E'en heroes?—where the lute that on the plains
The bending trees round Sacharissa ‡ calls?

* Sir Henry Sidney, Lord President of the Marches, who kept his court at Ludlow Castle; and also Lord Deputy of Ireland.

† Sir Philip Sidney and his Arcadia.

‡ Alluding to Waller's "Lines," written at Penshurst.

And are they fled?—Their day's for ever past!
Heroes and poets moulder in the earth.
No sound is heard but of the wailing blast
Through the lone rooms, where echoed crowded mirth!
Yet on their semblance Melancholy pores,
And all the faded splendour soon restores.

About 1814 I reprinted, at the Lee Priory press, Lord Brook's "Life of Sir Philip Sidney," which, as the composition of an intimate friend and contemporary—himself a poet of deep thought and many eminent qualities—is not only of the first authenticity, but is full of curious matter. What a pity that no such memoir has been left of Sir Philip's illustrious neighbour and contemporary Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, the sublime poet, who wrote the Induction and Legend of Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, for the "Mirror for Magistrates." It is grievous to think that this splendid genius, who lived to a great age, and was created Earl of Dorset by King James I., afterwards sunk the poet in the coarser character of statesman. His mother was a Brydges, daughter of Sir John Brydges, Lord Mayor of London—a remote branch of the Chandos family.

CHAPTER XX.

This chapter contains an extract of two long notes from the author's volume of "Lex Terræ," to justify his anxiety to recover the peerage of his ancestors—It intimates an intention to write a treatise on peerage law—It notices the intention which Pitt at one time had to confer the peerage on Burke—It hints the superiority of Burke over those on whom Pitt did confer the peerage—What a history of the peerage ought to be.

I INSERT the following from my "Lex Terræ," because it was only printed for private use; and there are scarcely ten complete copies of it in existence:—

"It has been often observed to me,—'Why have you sacrificed so many years of the flower of your life to the paltry ambition of a peerage, a thing of little worth?' Who is there who does not feel the spirit of supporting his hereditary rights? And who could have foreseen such results from it as have occurred? But these questioners forget that our nature is such, that men expose themselves to a life of hardships and dangers, and face death itself at the mouth of the cannon, for a new peerage; is then an old one of a venerable name worth no trouble or hazard? There is indeed a price far too high for it, and that it has cost me. I could not anticipate it: one is led on step by step, and then cannot extricate oneself: half the anxieties it has cost me would have put me

at the head of an honourable profession; while my faculties would have improved, instead of being broken by provoking crosses, and a sense of gross injustice. With all the historical blood which was known to flow in my veins, I did not want it for the purpose of gilding me with a false lustre; nor was it the only means open to me of respect and distinction. My faculties were not torpid, and, in many departments of honour, toil was a pleasure to me. I was in my twenty-seventh year when the right devolved upon my elder brother; and some years had already elapsed since I had been a candidate for public fame, and in a path into which men rarely enter, without some qualifications of a high nature. I do not pretend to have gained much popularity, but popularity is often the result of caprice; and though the blight damped my fire, it did not extinguish it. I have persevered, till at length I have obtained the praises of some whose approbation is more dear to me than all the gold in the world. Disappointment and discomfort have weakened whatever powers nature may have given me; but still I have struggled not entirely without fruit. In that worldly cunning which the ungenerous mistake for wisdom, I acknowledge myself to have been at all times deficient: and as to making my way in society by the ordinary means, it is quite incompatible with my temper and feelings; a love of books has always rendered tranquillity, solitude, and silence, necessary to me. And what do rank and honours avail in solitude? The great pleasure of existence lies in contemplating the charms of nature, and connecting them with those visionary ideas and feelings which elevate us in the orders of intellect. Were my delight in the bustle of society, lofty titles might secure those vain gratifications, for which congregated numbers are sought: but

honours do not augment the pleasures or the forces of the mind.

"I have entered into egotisms in the above passages, which may be thought not to belong to the subject I am treating; but they surely do belong to the main purport of the great question I have discussed. The injury done by withholding a peerage-right is according to the value of a peerage. Yet if I have procured comfort to myself under wrongs by the exercise of my own mind, it does not diminish the fault of the wrong-doer. Solitude is not the natural taste of man: that is acquired by the culture of the spirit, and the heart. The intellect will not continue in a sound state, but by perpetual regulation as well as labour.

"It is perfectly true, as Pope says, that

The proper study of mankind is man.

But how we are to conduct this study, is another question. It will be exclaimed, 'How is this to be studied in woods and fields?' I answer, 'Far better than in the bustle of mobs and the noise of streets.' A genuine imagination, well disciplined and well directed, will teach us far more than knowledge and observation put together. What taught Shakspeare the knowledge of life, manners, and the human heart? Imagination—pure imagination! This is the imagination which is the noblest quality of the mind; not fantastic imagination. Ingenious and perverse comment may assert, that proud and vain men like solitude, because it is a scene where they may nurse the dreams of their own self-importance, without exposure to have them disturbed. It is a general, if not universal, passion, to have one's name

Virûm volitare per ora:

and solitude itself is one of the sources whence it is to spring, or whence we think we hear it issue. The air supplies to us the ideal sounds, which we imagine to be floating upon it; yet, perhaps, while we flatter ourselves, our names have never gone beyond our own personal acquaintance. Celebrity is in numerous instances a mere chance, the *arbitrium popularis aurœ*: men gain it for mere follies, and miss it after a life of labour and virtue.

"If an author is not the fashion, nobody will read him, for nobody judges for himself, and nobody will read what is not talked about; the rest is to them labour for nothing. All this is necessarily spoken of the mere mass of the world: there are of course many exceptions; but compared with society at large, they are as nothing. Taste left to itself, and venturing to judge by its own feelings, will almost always be right. But who will venture to have confidence in himself against the opinion of the world? He may have moments of defiance and self-assurance, but fear will prevail: he knows his own weakness, he cannot be sure of his own strength.

"But in these days what respect is secured by the artificial influence of a peerage? It is mingled with all sorts of jobbers and the least-regarded members of society. When men rise by worthy means, by pure intellectual labour, and solid pre-eminence of knowledge in learned professions, they are the most distinguished, as they are the most useful ornaments of society. But, alas! there are men who usurp these places with a total absence of these merits—men whose talents vanish into vapour when strictly examined, and whose corrupt passions fill the examiner with disgust and indignation. We have seen men rise by pure unassisted strength, unconnected with politics and intrigues; but the instances are very—very rare! There have been among those who have risen men

of brilliant abilities and acquirements, whose qualities alone entitled them to the elevation, but yet who would in fact have not been able so to ascend without the collateral aid of manœuvres and corruption, among which parliamentary and party connexions have always been the first. But the vast profusion of these honours among undeserving and meanly-allied people has utterly degraded them in universal estimation. There may have been a time when a base servility was paid them. It may be pleaded that this cannot change the pretensions of the old nobility; but it does change them in the eyes of the public: the public confounds them in one mass; and besides, they soon intermarry, and actually blend themselves into one blood, while they who come last from the working forge are nearer the habits of activity and manœuvre, and by these means soon get the upper hand.

"It is said of the few old nobility who survive, that the larger part are worn out; and there are some symptoms of it, if we look at personal characters and habits: besides, the really old nobility are not in general the richest. Several of the largest estates belong to comparatively new peers. Perhaps we may venture to extend the name of the old peerage to those whose dates in the male line are prior to the abdication of James II.,—though in strictness, it ought to be limited to the death of Queen Elizabeth. From the accession of King James I. a great relaxation of quality took place; though that monarch's first list was very respectable. We see by the commencement of Lord Redesdale's argument what was the nature of his temper and bearing towards the old peerage. I remember Lord Ellenborough saying something of the same sort, as of ill-will towards men who claimed, on the ground of inheritance, to take place of such men as himself, who had had to win their honours by their personal

labours! Lord Ellenborough's political feelings and professions had all been on the democratic side, till by a sudden fluctuation of ministerial arrangements, he came unexpectedly into office, and thus became seated in a high place. He then became a stern and unrelenting Tory. How different from his predecessor, Lord Chief Justice Holt, who, having commenced on the constitutional side, held his liberal course unshaken and unbending, in spite of the crown, and the threats of the whole house of peers, to the last.

"Perhaps the most influential aristocracy of the present day is the aristocracy of literary genius. It certainly is not the aristocracy of ancient titles and high birth: it may be the aristocracy of the Stock Exchange, and new wealth, which is the worst of all aristocracies, and such as is always soon followed by the positive downfall of a nation. The present government of England is entirely in the hands of a strictly new aristocracy. An honourable ancestry, I admit, is worse than nothing, where the descendant is mean, pitiful, and vulgar, in his pursuits and amusements: but an upstart is *always* full of insult, envy, resentment, tyranny, and plot. His delight is to crush under his feet him whom, by whatever means, he has got down.

"The worst of literary aristocracy is, that it too often abuses its powers, to mislead the minds of the people. If it works by conspiracy to a particular end, and not with integrity and conviction, it is very dangerous: it is far more powerful than animal strength, or political or pecuniary command. But when it is led by the lamp of genius, enamoured of truth, and cultivating the fruits of the mind for their own sake, then it is a blessing to a country, and really merits that veneration and worship

which are too often bestowed on the corrupt idols raised by selfishness and ignorance.

"Thinking thus, I feel indignant at the paltry suspicion that I am endeavouring to seek personal exaltation by vain and empty means, which I well know how to appreciate duly;—and to which I am not driven by that individual defectiveness, that dares not rely on itself. I do not believe that the blood of which we are composed, the mortal particles which we inherit from our ancestors, go far towards influencing the character of the mind, which descends entire to take its abode in this receptacle of clay; but which the impediments and frailties of the body may sometimes tie down, and overcloud. Far be it from me to exhibit any part of that arrogance which is offensive, from whatever quarter it comes. But, on the verge of sixty-eight, neglected, traduced, misrepresented, I am compelled to say something in my own defence. Gross injuries, and torrents of misfortune and sorrow, have not broken my courage, or stupified my intellect; I have raised my heart and temper above these ungenerous persecutions, extortions, and deprivations. I have worked hard without reward, or even seeking reward; I have not indeed worked in the track I would have done, if I had received more cheers: my spirits, clouded, though not destroyed, have been more humble in their aspirations; and I have done the work of an antiquary, a bibliographer, when I might have done better things. If the want of worldly success is the proof of the want of talent, I stand truly low in intellect: the meanest and the most ignorant have in this respect distanced me with ease. My mental exertions have never turned to cunning; and I never could avoid to betray what I thought, either by my lips or my countenance. If I am asked

whether, if I could live over again, I would pass the same course—I answer, most assuredly not! I am fully sensible of thousands of errors, and believe that I now see paths by which I might have gone successfully onward without compromising my virtue and my taste, with little mortification,—and no opening for the attacks of my enemies: I deeply grieve at the loss of time and opportunity, at the waste of energies, and the loop-holes afforded for the poisoned arrows of fools! I would have disarmed some of those men who have taken advantage of my neglect and idleness, to spit their arrows at me from their high places, which I think I could have barred from them.

"Never, if I had continued to spur my courser on the same ground with them, would I have suffered them to put forth their absurd perversions of the law, without detection and exposure. But perhaps it was this beloved but dangerous poetry that in part seduced me; and Cowley may have spoken truly, when he said with such inimitable beauty,

> Where once such fairies dance, no grass doth ever grow.

Would that I could recall those days of early vigour, when no pleasure could equal to me that of the intensity of literary study and literary labour, when Hope was in her full splendour, and clouds were not yet seen even in the distance! This radiance did not last long; and as the *non possunt quia non posse videntur*, is a very common feeling, and especially true with me, my faculties evaporated at once. All the power that belonged to me, belonged to me by involuntary impulse; the impulse came by fits, but not in their full strength.

"With this disposition, and under these circumstances,

is it or is it not probable that the desire of a peerage can operate with an undue passion on my mind? Objectors will answer this question by asking another—'Why then contend so warmly for it?' Because I would contend for a feather, if it were withheld from me unjustly, illegally, cruelly, and insultingly. Peerages are every day diminishing in value, even the most ancient peerages: and such is the political state of Europe, that it may probably not be long ere they are utterly swallowed up. I have also other reasons to contend: I read in the speeches of Lords Redesdale and Ellenborough that they consider quiescence to be abandonment; and construe it to be in a course of time a bar to the right. It is a doctrine which, as applied to honours, is well known never to have been set up before; but being once set up by two judicial characters, it is certain to be urged hereafter."

I have been almost tempted to transcribe several subsequent articles from the same volume, on the same topic: but I refrain from giving more on what has been already printed, though so few copies of that volume have gone abroad. If I live, I am still inclined to write a treatise on peerage law, on which the anomalies in the Chandos, Banbury, and Lisle cases, may be fully and boldly discussed. I did not expect, when I began the "Lex Terræ," that I should have such aids as the volumes of Le Marchant and Nicolas; and that Lords Redesdale and Ellenborough

would condemn themselves out of their own mouths.

It is said that Pitt once hinted that he would recommend Burke for a peerage: but that he soon cooled in his intention, and Burke heard no more of it. Let us compare him with the placemen and others, on whom the peerage has been conferred. Who would have been honoured by it?—The peerage,—not he. But Burke was not of the class whom Pitt loved to promote to the peerage, nor was he one whose extent and richness of intellect Pitt could measure or appreciate. Pitt was in this respect no eagle, who could look unblinded on the blaze of the sun. Burke's fortune was small: but was the fortune of the placemen, courtiers, and others, whom Pitt and his successors have elevated to the upper house, large? I will not offend them by giving a list of these more favoured acquirers of a coronet, who now make so large a portion of the peerage. Of the immense augmentations to the peerage, I will state the precise numbers in a future chapter.

The history of the English peerage, philosophically and critically written, would make a curious political work. I have often contemplated it; and if I live a little longer, may even yet execute it. It is a subject which I have studied assiduously for fifty years, and such as a mere knowledge of pedigree would not enable any

author to execute. The habit of looking into characters, and drawing them with discrimination, liveliness, and truth, is an indispensable qualification; a pedigree-monger has nothing of this.

CHAPTER XXI.

Mean talents often fill high stations—Sharpness of temper mistaken for sharpness of wit—Every one sometimes blunders—Characters of Lord Rosslyn and Lord Mansfield—Andrew Stuart—Characters of Lord Kenyon — of Lord Ellenborough — of Judge Lawrence—of Lord Redesdale and Sir Edward Coke—of Lord Erskine—Lord Tenterden—of Spencer Perceval — The House of Yvery—Lord Redesdale's marriage—Character of Lord Alvanley—Anecdote of him — Sir Samuel Romilly — Lord Eldon — Chief Baron Eyre, Sir James Mansfield, Sir Vicary Gibbs, and Sir Thomas Plomer—Lord Gifford—Lord Lyndhurst—Eloquence of the Bar miserable—Qualities necessary for an eminent lawyer.

THERE have been great men in great offices;—but there have been very little men too. One is surprised sometimes to see what puny talents have been lifted into high functions — men who had neither originality, nor brilliance, nor force, nor justness of thought; but who by mere industry and a factitious memory have got together something they have called knowledge, but which they knew not how to apply. Such knowledge so got, and so mal-adroitly applied, is mischievous.

There is another unfortunate confusion, which too many are apt to make: they often mistake

sharpness of temper for sharpness of talent. A severe tone, and the pointed words which ill-nature prompts, operate upon dull hearers as if the matter was acute or just. This deception even operates upon minds one would have thought far above such delusions. There are too many who will not take the trouble to examine the soundness of an argument, even when they are capable of doing it. It is said that

Aliquando bonus dormitat Homerus;

but he who, if we judge by his blunders, is oftener asleep than awake, must have inborn and inveterate dulness. However, all who blunder do not sleep, for some of them roar; and we seldom roar in our sleep, though we often babble.

The late Lord Rosslyn was a subtle reasoner; but he had no strength, closeness, or rectitude about him, and convinced no one. As he was not, loud, but flexible and insinuating, his very manner raised suspicion. Lord Mansfield had something of the same sort, but he was more eloquent, and had a higher taste. He had lived with poets and great men from his youth, and could exhibit Truth dressed in her native beauty; but he could also set off the false *déesse* in attractive colours when it answered his purpose to do so. Andrew Stuart's "Letters" to him on the Douglas cause made a great impression, and will never be forgotten.

Lord Kenyon's manner was entirely technical: he had no eloquence nor command of language; but he was supposed to have a deep skill in the law, and, having natural acuteness and sagacity, to apply it in most cases accurately. But his temper was quick and irritable, and, never having had a liberal education nor lived in the world, his notions and sentiments were narrow and bigotted;—he could not generalise; and these defects gave him a want of dignity, which much detracted from the influence and weight of his decisions.

Lord Ellenborough was brought up at Peterhouse, Cambridge, of which his father, the Bishop of Carlisle, was master. He was considered rather industrious, but scarcely above *par* in talents, yet then displayed the same violent and overbearing temper as he did through life. He allowed no peace to those over whom his surly and sarcastic spirit got the ascendant,—witness poor Capel Lofft, his fellow-collegian. He was very unlike his younger brother, George, now Bishop of Bath and Wells, who was a milder man, and had better talents, and took a much higher degree many years afterwards,—I think in 1781. We were a short time at college together, but I saw little of him, as he was at that time immersed in his studies to prepare for his degree, and therefore associated with scarcely any one. It was long before Edward made any way

at the Bar, till, being connected with the East Indians by the marriage of his sister with Sir Thomas Rumbold, he was employed as one of the counsel on Hastings' trial. From that time he got on a little, but was never considered as a leader, till, on the sudden dissolution of Pitt's ministry in 1801, when Addington had a difficulty of making up his patched administration, Law, much to every one's surprise, was named attorney-general. He was then fifty years old.

It was supposed that with a party formed of such feeble and discordant ingredients, a bold man was wanted in that post, and that Law's sarcastic temper would be of use to them. He had been there scarcely a year when Kenyon's death opened to him the high office of chief-justice of King's Bench and a peerage. Naturally inclined to exercise the ascendancy of his humour, that sudden tide of fortune puffed him into the skies. He was impatient, hasty, vituperative, and by necessary consequence sometimes incorrect in his authorities, arguments, conclusions, and opinions. As long as Judge Lawrence, who was known to be a better lawyer, as well as of better abilities and of greater mildness of temper and disposition, remained on the Bench, he was in some degree under his control. There is some advantage to the public, though not to the suitors, in such a mind and temper as Lord Ellenborough's; it makes dispatch of busi-

ness, for what it cannot untie, it cuts or tears asunder.

We need not draw the character of Lord Redesdale, for he has drawn it with sufficient accuracy, though he has, by a strange error, written under it no less a name than that of the great chief-justice, Sir Edw. Coke. The oddity is, that no two judges or lawyers could ever have been less alike. Nature had given profound abilities and deep learning to the one; and no abilities at all, and nothing like true learning to the other.

Lord Erskine was a perfect contrast to all these. He was a most brilliant, but sometimes a shooting, star. He had every variety of intellect, and was adorned with all beauty of language, all harmony of utterance, and all fire and grace of expression in his countenance and form. As he was of the highest Scottish nobility in blood, so he showed it in all his mien, tone, and manners. The very conflicting brilliance of his numerous superiorities led him into unsteadiness, and often into errors. He sometimes passed too hastily over subjects to have entered deep into them, and thus incurred the charge of superficial talents, when no man was more capable of entering profoundly into an investigation, or had a more sagacious and correct judgment when he chose to give his mind to it; but the meteors that danced before him often led him on too rapidly and too irregularly. He was apt to grasp at too much,

and not unfrequently found that he embraced clouds which vanished in his arms. His imagination often led him into wider fields than a court of law relishes or comprehends; and the airy notions and profusion of colours which he interposed occasionally, became fatiguing and oppressive to the technical dulness of professional men. They were considered by them to be lights that led astray, but still "they were lights from heaven."

He abounded in beautiful reflection and sentiment; but some may have supposed these to have been supplied rather by memory than from original internal sources. I do not admit this: the application of them was so happy, that they could not have so fitted if they had not been original. The ingredients may have been new-combined in large portions; not so original, for instance, in all their particles as those of Burke, of whom not only the whole, but every separate part is commonly new.

Erskine's rapidity and lightness of wing made him often take the first hasty view of his own mind, than search in books for technical knowledge and arbitrary authority. His arguments, therefore, are commonly addressed rather to the general condition of men's understandings than to professional auditors. All these distinctions may be exemplified and illustrated, by a comparison of his speeches with those of the other law lords

in the Banbury case, as reported by Le Marchant.

Erskine by his constant practice in the courts of common law was not qualified to shine as lord chancellor. The fall of his party soon removed him from the woolsack; and then his faculties seemed to be worn out, and that brilliant constellation of mind threw out nothing but casual, erratic, and flighty sparks. We are bound to remember the splendour of the noon-day sun, and not reproach the evening if it sets in clouds.

The character of Lord Tenterden I shall reserve for a separate memoir, as he was my intimate friend from our mutual ages of twelve and a half years, till his deeply lamented death,—a loss which nothing can repair to me. Even the public journals allowed him to have filled his high office of chief justice of England with more learning, ability, and integrity, than any one who had sat in that seat since Lord Holt.

Perceval had the most extraordinary rise. From no practice at all, he was, at the age of thirty-nine, appointed by Addington solicitor-general; the next year he succeeded Law as attorney-general; and then, on the dismissal of the Talents, was made the Duke of Portland's chancellor of the exchequer, on whose death he became premier; and, what is singular, had no adequate capacity for any one of these situations. He had no oratory, but a barking, snappish

manner; a little plain person, and an inharmonious voice: he had quickness, but it appeared to me principally the quickness of temper: his turn was sarcasm and biting cavil, which certainly had the effect of keeping people in subjection. He was an inveterate Tory, and thought all nobility was monopolized by the house of Perceval. His ancestor had gone over to Ireland to make his fortune in the reign of Queen Elizabeth,—it is said out of Somersetshire, — and contrived to feather his nest like numerous other English adventurers. He may have been a cadet of the Somersetshire family, to which his successors have annexed him; but as in that case there were two brothers, each named Richard, of that date, the identity looks a little suspicious, and the attorney-general would have cavilled with all his might on the ground of such an objection if it had happened in another family. His father was a very assiduous genealogist, and I believe his grandfather was the same, as the work compiled by them, called "The House of Yvery," sufficiently proves. It was a history which excited the ridicule even of the gentle Mrs. Katherine Talbot. It has a great display of heraldry, and castles, and mansions; and, among the rest, a print of the actual lodging-house at Tunbridge Wells where Lord Egmont passed one of his summers or part of it! I presume it was at this attorney-general's table, in 1801, that the new lord

chancellor of Ireland, Mitford, now declining into years, found a wife in his sister, who was verging to that character which Hayley so offended Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, by placing her at its head, in his novel of "The Old Maid." The lady however produced an heir, and the new peer has imparted all the splendid heraldry of the house of Yvery to his blood. So goes the world, and of such things are made up the farces of life.

I must not leave Pepper Arden, Lord Alvanley, out of the group; for his ugly, broken-nosed face, and goggle eyes often made me laugh, and I once was near having the misfortune of swamping him—most unintentionally. It was at Bath, in the early part of the year 1797, when he was Sir Pepper Arden, Knight, and Master of the Rolls into the bargain. I then commanded a troop of Fencible Cavalry; and our colonel, being very justly proud of his regiment, and anxious to show it off in all his manœuvres, begged his friend, the learned knight, to come and review them on one of the Downs near the city —no doubt because he thought him as good a judge of a regiment and its movements as he was of all the intricacies of a question at law; and his Honour, being a very good-natured man, not at all like Sir Edward Law—then only king's counsel—obeyed the summons. The little man, though I observed him something timorous and fidgetty, was placed in front of the battle, and desired to

inspect us with the severest scrutiny, for our colonel was sure that he would find nothing but to praise. At length came the charge: the colonel assured him that he might keep his station, for all was as safe as on his seat in the Rolls Court, and that at the word "Halt" the whole six troops in a line would stop dead, however loudly and fiercely they should come rattling on towards him. Unluckily the whole were fired with glory, and began to increase their speed, till — being on a blood charger of considerable swiftness—my horse could not bear the clatter behind him, and off he shot beyond my momentary control. His Honour was right before me: he gave a shriek and a groan—I saw his distress, and by one mighty effort brought up my horse, and had the happiness thus to save the life of this eloquent oracle of the law, over whom I must otherwise have gone sword in hand; and what a crush and manglement would then have ensued! The colonel made many apologies, and I got a severe rating. But, lo, what his Honour lived for,—to vote, six years afterwards, against the Chandos claim; of the merits of which, as he had but lately been elevated to the upper house, he knew nothing.

Lord Alvanley had a confused, babbling manner of talking, which made it wonderful how he had ever attained to high offices in the law: nor had he more credit for knowledge in his pro-

fession than for oratory. Pitt had promoted him to the attorney-generalship, among the many strange choices of the patronage which he conferred; and he became the subject of one of the most ludicrous odes in the "Rolliad." They who knew him better than I did considered him of an easy temper, and not meaning ill, though of a blundering understanding.

Sir Samuel Romilly was a profound lawyer, a deep and original thinker, of a most sensitive and conscientious mind, full of benevolence, patriotism, and liberal principles, and in all respects a most exemplary and admirable man; and it is a melancholy proof of the spiteful and perverse freaks of fortune, that he never lived to fill the highest offices, and attain the highest honours of his profession.

Lord Eldon I had many opportunities of seeing nearly, as he was many years counsel for the Chandos claim, and took a zealous part in it, but delicacy restrains me from enlarging on this topic, as his lordship is still living at a venerable age; and were I to praise, I should be suspected of flattery; were I to blame, I could not speak with freedom, except that I must repeat my protest against the manner in which he treated the ill-starred circular letter. Of his lordship's profound talents, and great skill in the law, there can be no question.

I knew little of Chief Baron Eyre, Sir James Mansfield, Sir Vicary Gibbs, or Sir Thomas

Plomer. The first three at least were able lawyers, and the second and third much superior in talents and acquirements either to Lord Redesdale or Lord Ellenborough. I believe Sir Thomas Plomer had been distinguished at Oxford, and was a friend of Sir William Jones. I remember him latterly in parliament—a languid, confused, and inefficient speaker: but his health was probably then gone.

Lord Gifford had a surprising rise; but I could trace nothing of ability in his parliamentary speeches; he was pushed forward too rapidly, not having had the advantage of a liberal education. It was impossible for him to have laid in any stock of general knowledge.

Of all the men who struck me at once, Lord Lyndhurst's talents made the greatest impression upon me: this was on an election committee, where he was counsel as late as 1813.

I suppose men often make way by the fame of knowledge, who are miserable speakers, for the eloquence of the Bar is generally wretched. One is surprised that, among such innumerable reports, there are not more inconsistent decisions than really occur. It shows that whatever be the power of argument, cases are pretty well sifted beforehand; and that the Bar are diligent, and hold a responsibility over the Court. Yet how many men of very humble powers we meet who have had success in this profession!

It is easy to explain theoretically what would

seem to be the talents best fitted for the Bar and the Bench; but practically a number of accidental circumstances must concur to bring them into play. Some men have a right judgment and a knowledge of cases without the power of explaining themselves, and therefore cannot make their knowledge available. Others cannot obtrude themselves with sufficient firmness to make a commencement; and no one, till he has persevered a little while, can gain sufficient self-possession to display what he knows. He who will not be put down at first will gain the ear of the Court at last, however bad his manner, if his knowledge be sound and his judgment good.

CHAPTER XXII.

Effect of the Lords' Resolution, 1803, on the author's mind—Words of the Attorney-General's Report on the Chandos claim—Character of Sir Edward Coke by Lord Redesdale—An exact portrait of himself—Lord Ellenborough's declaration that he was chained to the law—How he kept it—Honourable character of Attorney-General Macdonald—*Soit droit fait* petitioned for—Lord Redesdale's warning to the Lords that they were interested in rejecting the Banbury claim—Lord Ellenborough's complaint that Lords should gain a seat in the upper house, except by their own labours—Inconsistence of this with an hereditary peerage—Such misconduct in the affairs of the world drives one to solitude—Sonnet, written 1807—Another sonnet—A third sonnet, 1826—Such sonnets appropriate to these memorials—Four more sonnets, written at Paris, 1826—Two more sonnets, written at Lee Priory, July and August, 1826—No more poetry written by the author for four years from that time.

THE characters I have been pourtraying have brought me back to the year 1803. I was then in my forty-first year,—an age at which most men have attained any eminence they have ever reached: but this unexpected Resolution of the Lords threw us all out of our sphere. Considering the peculiarity of the circumstances which produced it, I cannot cast it away from my thoughts. If such a thing could have happened in Lord Chief Justice Holt's time, it would have

been remedied instantly; but there was no use to apply from Lord Ellenborough, a leader of the committee, to Lord Ellenborough in his own court. He could not gainsay what he had thus deliberately said, however little reason or authority there was in it. Let us refer to the words of the attorney-general, as given by Cruise in his "Treatise on Dignities:"—

"1790. The Rev. Edward Tymewell Brydges claimed the barony of Chandos, stating that her Majesty, Queen Mary, by letters patent, in the first year of her reign, (1554,) granted to Sir John Brydges, knight, the title and dignity of Baron Chandos of Sudeley, to hold to him and the heirs male of his body for ever:—that the said John, first Lord Chandos, had issue three sons,—Edmund, his eldest son; Charles, his second son; and Anthony, his third son; and likewise other younger sons:—that the title of Baron Chandos descended to the eldest son, and continued in his issue male until the death of William, seventh Lord Chandos, without issue male, when the line of Edmund, eldest son of John, first Lord Chandos, failed:—that the title then descended to Sir James Brydges, baronet, eighth Lord Chandos, who was the great-grandson and heir male of the body of Charles, the second son of the first Lord Chandos, and continued in his male issue until the death of James, Duke of Chandos, in 1789, without issue male, when there was a total failure

of heirs male of the body of Charles, the second son of the first Lord Chandos; and, upon such failure, the claimant submitted that he was entitled to inherit the same honour and dignity, as heir male of the body of Anthony, the third son of the first Lord Chandos.

"The attorney-general reported, that he conceived the claimant had proved himself to be the heir male of the body of John, first Lord Chandos, and, as such, entitled to the honour and dignity of Baron Chandos of Sudeley, by evidence which, although not without some difficulty, would be probably deemed sufficient to prove his title to any other species of inheritance, the foundation of which was laid so far back as 1554."

"June 13, 1803. The petition and report having been referred to the House of Peers, a majority of the committee not thinking the evidence sufficient, it was resolved, that the petitioner had not made out his claim to the title and dignity of Baron Chandos."

Having given one citation, I must now give another: it is a very remarkable one. These are the words of Lord Redesdale's character of the great lawyer, Sir Edward Coke, in his speech on the Banbury claim:—

"I am ready," said his Lordship, "to accede to an assertion made by some of his cotemporaries, that Sir Edward Coke was too fond of *making* instead of *declaring* the law, and of telling

untruths to support his own opinions." Indeed, an obstinate perseverance in any opinion he had embraced was a leading defect in his character. His dispute with Lord Ellesmere furnishes us with a very strong instance of his forcing the construction of terms, and making false definitions, when it answered his purpose to do it." *

Lord Ellenborough also declared that "he was chained to the law; and prayed that, if he swerved from it, he might incur the reprobation of the world, which he should then merit."

Yet, when these assertions were hazarded, the first of these noble Lords was himself endeavouring to make the law instead of declaring it, and was himself especially characterized by the obstinacy of his opinions; and the other was not only swerving from the law to which he swore himself bound, but absolutely contradicting it in the rash assertion that the decided law of the land was "wrong."

These facts will go farther than all the arguments in the world to show the value of the judicial opinions of these noble Lords.

Then, to return to the report of the attorney-general,—the honest, accomplished, and high-born Sir Archibald Macdonald, who remained all his long life a commoner, while Lords Redesdale and Ellenborough attained the peerage!—what

* Le Marchant, p. 437.

could overturn this but the solemn decision and judgment of a regular court of law, within whose jurisdiction the trial of the facts lay?—that is, according to the provisions of Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights, "due process of law and trial by jury." Has this been done?—No. Has it been petitioned for again and again?—Yes: but it could not be done with common discretion during Lord Ellenborough's life, for the reason already given.

This has been a most painful situation, and aggravated in this way,—that the unsuccessful are always supposed by the malevolence of the world to be in the wrong. "What!" they said, "the high tribunal of the Lords!—can you suppose they would do an act of injustice? What interest could they have in coming to a wrong decision?" Lord Redesdale has himself answered this; he has told them what interest the Lords had in such a case. He begins his speech on the Banbury case in these memorable words: "This is a question not simply between the Crown and the claimant; it affects every peer whose patent is of a subsequent date to the patent of William, Earl of Banbury." Is any thing farther wanted than the assertion of their own favourite judge? Then Lord Ellenborough complained how hard it was that persons should be put among the peers who had not worked for it, as he had done!—an odd argument against a seat in the House, of

which the essence was hereditability. "This, it will be said, was temper,—not ignorance or incapacity of argument: but want of temper is a greater disqualification in a judge, than want of capacity or want of knowledge.

In this chance-medley way, or something worse, the affairs of the world are conducted. Let no one lull himself into the confidence that he is safe in his rights because his cause is just. I know that we must take the world as it is, and that it is better to submit to wrong, than wear out one's days with over-anxiety, or intrigue, or busy interference. Solitude, and the wild, but innocent and exalting delusions of the Muse are better. This I thought at one time, as the following sonnet (published in a paper of "The Ruminator," in "Censura Literaria") will prove:

SONNET,

WRITTEN AUGUST 20, 1807.

Though in my veins the blood of monarchs flow—
Plantagenet and Tudor—not for these
With empty boast my lifted mind I please;
But rather that my heart's emotions glow
With the pure flame the Muse's gifts bestow:
Nor would it my aspiring soul appease,
In rank, birth, wealth, to loll at sensual ease,
And none but Folly's stupid flattery know.
But yet when upstart greatness turns an eye
Of scorn and insult on my modest fame,
And on descent's pretensions vain would try
To build the honours of a nobler name,
With pride defensive swelling, I exclaim,
"Base one, e'en there with me thou durst not vie!"

This sonnet struck Hayley, and he wrote me a commendatory sonnet and letter on the subject; but my papers were all left in England, and I cannot now refer to them,—even if they are not lost or made waste of. The person who gave occasion to this sonnet is gone to his grave,—covered, as many will contend, with glory; though I doubt if the laurels which were thrown upon his ashes will long retain their verdure.

Again another sonnet, probably written about the same time, or not long before :—

SONNET.

Black from the sky November fogs impend,
And drizzling mists enshroud the hill and vale;
While o'er the darken'd downs my course I bend,
And pleased, below, the shelter'd valley hail.
With dangers compass'd round, beset with foes,
As on the daring steed I seek my way,
Methinks the scowling tempest suits my woes,
And soothes the cares that on my bosom prey.
O lovely Muse! 'tis thine with heavenly power
To throw a charm on sorrow's gloomiest hues,
And through the deepening clouds that round us lower,
A piercing ray of golden light diffuse.
Ah, generous maid! amid the sable storm,
Circled with brightest beams, still shines thy fairy form!

Still in the same strain, I wrote at Paris, about twenty years afterwards, the following :—

SONNET,

WRITTEN MAY 21, 1826.

The long, long years that I have spent in woe,
Began at thirty, turn my hair to grey:
Since three-and-thirty more have made their way;
Those locks, as white and bleach'd as driven snow,

Hang sad and wither'd on my furrow'd brow: —
For never has my fate assign'd a day
That at its dawn with smiling faith could say,
"Me free from clouds and sorrows shalt thou know!"
The destiny of man is grief: no lore
Of wisdom follow'd can protect from pain.
Could we be faultless, still we should deplore
Some ill of others—some unlook'd-for doom
Of deep affection buried in the tomb—
Some loss that we must weep, and ever weep in vain!

Will any one say that such poems as these are irrelevant to the memorials of one's own life? When they continue in one strain from youth to age, are they not proofs of a consistent course of feelings, which must form part of oneself? When authors write from memory, they take every factitious humour which others impose. "'Feelings'! —what have we to do with your feelings?" cries the brutified man,—"we want facts." But to those who, if they have any claims to notice, derive them from the mind, feelings are every thing. We ought to use reason upon matter; but not reason only,—our hearts ought to be affected by what we reason upon. Our affections ought to be easily awakened, noble, and tender. We ought not merely to be actuated by a cold conviction of the understanding, but to be impelled by the generous emotions of the bosom. Affectation of feeling is loathsome; but deep feeling is inseparable from genius. No man had more of it than Byron; yet he had the strange perverseness to affect to be hard and insensible.

What makes Gray's poems so delightful?—The moral feeling which is associated with his imagery. This is the attraction of Matthew Green's popular little poem, "The Spleen."

If I cannot succeed in showing what is the temperament of my heart, I shall have done nothing by these memorials.

ANOTHER SONNET,

WRITTEN AT PARIS, MAY 13, 1826.

To wander in the shade of leafy trees,
When the bright sun burns fierce, and scent the flower
That blooms alone beneath the pierceless power
Of umbrage cool; by musing deep to seize
The thought, that like a passing spirit flees:
Then sit in silent peace, nor heed the hour—
Lost e'en the chime from yonder distant tower—
Yet waked by the lone whisper of the breeze!
Perhaps, amid the hollow joys of life,
The disappointing charms, the real woes,
The pang of which no medicine soothes the strife,
The blank dull day that nought but languor knows,
The wearisome disgusts, the hates, the wants,—
Here only Heaven a pure existence grants!

This sonnet was written in some of the more shady walks of the Bois de Boulogne. It was written with the most entire sincerity; and I could not more accurately have described my feelings in prose. Yet even then, dreams of ambition were intermingled with fits of melancholy, and momentary resolves never to emerge from solitude again. I soon afterwards went to England, in the hope of getting into Parliament.

again; but was a week too late. I found also that my legal agents had so acted in my absence, as to cause me inextricable losses and sufferings; which, after a few months, I had not the fortitude to support any longer with calmness: and the baseness of human nature then became so much more impressed upon me, that for the first time I lost my buoyant spirits. I had filled my mind with Italian scenery, Italian arts, and Italian literature; but all would not do. A heavy and intolerable blank came over me, and covered all in massy and breathless darkness. Never did a gleam of the Muse break in upon me during that sable crisis! Yet see, a month or two before, in what a state of undecayed enthusiasm I had been. Then it was that I wrote thus:—

SONNET,

WRITTEN AT PARIS, MAY 10, 1826.

Stern, unexpecting good, unbent by wrong,
I travel onward through this gloomy scene
With brow of sorrow, yet erect in mien;
Meek to the humble, in defiance strong
To Folly's, Envy's, Hatred's, Falsehood's throng:
Yet knowing that the birth and grave between
There ever will, as ever there has been,
Be friendships fickle, warfares deep and long!
If I have taught the truths of Wisdom's lore,
If I have drawn the secrets of the heart,
And raised the glow that mounts o'er grief and ill—
In my plain verse though bloom no single flower,
And not a ray of wit its lustre dart,
Its naked strength o'er death will triumph still!

SONNET,

WRITTEN AT PARIS, MAY 11, 1826.

High name of Poet!—sought in every age
By thousands,—scarcely won by two or three,—
As with the thorns of this sad pilgrimage
My bleeding feet are doom'd their war to wage,
With awful worship I have bow'd to thee!
And yet perchance it is not Fate's decree
This mighty boon should be assign'd to me,
My heart's consuming fever to assuage.—
Fountain of Poesy! that liest deep
Within the bosom's innermost recesses,
And rarely burstest forth to human ear,
Break out;—and, while profoundly magic sleep
With pierceless veil all outward forms oppresses,
Let me the music of thy murmurs hear.

SONNET,

WRITTEN MAY 18, 1826.

What gains the plaudits of the multitude?
To echo their own thoughts,—their own emotions
As in a mirror to reflect. Devotions
Ne'er in their breasts were waken'd, as they view'd
Forms of ideal beauty; but with rude
Scoffs they receive those wild but lofty notions,
Which from Castalia's flame-inspiring potions
On the true poet's raptured mind intrude.
Then, lo, the source of vulgar sympathy!—
Light laughter, heartless joy, the ridicule
Of love of fame that lives laborious days;
Disdain of the unmercenary sigh;
Use of the gay un-self-protecting fool;
Faith in the solid fruit; and scorn of barren praise!

* *

On my first return to England, June, 1826, I retained my spirits for two or three months, till the dark scrolls of my agents began to unveil

themselves in all the fulness of their horrible deformity. Then the chords of my heart seemed to snap at once, and an unutterable despondence encircled me as in a deadly vault, where the vapours of pestilence and the most painful annihilation on earth felt as if they could never again be dispelled. They were mingled with every sort of insolence and indignity,—the last resource of audacious and reckless dishonesty. These may seem bold assertions;—I am ready to prove them before any court, and to justify them in due form.

During the first two or three months my poetical humour had not entirely left me, and I wrote the two following sonnets:—

SONNET,

WRITTEN AT LEE PRIORY, IN KENT, JULY 28, 1826.

To spend the day in musing, yet to muse
With thought profound as well as just; to trace
The evanescent lines that interlace
Immingled right and wrong,—and thus the hues
To separate that common eyes confuse;
Virtue with her own simple flowers to grace;
To cheer the generous spirit to the race;
And new-sprung bays for Honour's grave to choose;—
Are labours not unworthy him, who lives
The lore of abstract wisdom to descry;
In realms of intellect who fondly gives
His zeal, with shadowy tribes of light to vie;
And, heedless of material objects round,
To traverse air escapes his earthly bound

SONNET,

WRITTEN AT LEE PRIORY, AUGUST 10, 1826.

Praise of the wise and good!—it is a meed
For which I would lone years of toil endure;
Which many a peril, many a grief would cure!
As onward I with weary feet proceed,
My swelling heart continues still to bleed;
The glittering prize holds out its distant lure,
But seems, as nearer I approach, less sure,
And never to my prayer to be decreed!—
With anxious ear I listen to the voice
That shall pronounce the precious boon I ask;
But yet it comes not,—or it comes in doubt.
Slave to the passion of my earliest choice,
From youth to age I ply my daily task,
And hope, e'en till the lamp of life goes out.

For about four years from this day I wrote not another verse. I sometimes tried to convince myself whether my faculties were entirely gone, but could not succeed. I have written many thousands since,—probably not less than twenty thousand. While my spirits do not fail, I can write poetry—or at least verses—as easily as prose; and I care not whether they are blank verse or rhyme: but I am not so stupid as to be unaware that these compositions must be tried by their quality, not by their quantity. Many hold the adage, *Μέγα βιβλίον μέγα κακόν*. Croker, in his edition of "Boswell's Life of Johnson," has

made a new and admirable remark on Gray,—"that no poet who has written little, has afforded so many passages which are on every one's lips for their beauty of thought and happiness of expression."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Young's "Love of Fame, the universal passion"—Self-delusions as to self-consequence—Can one estimate his own talents?—What are tests—Easy to make books—Bishop Tomline's "Life of Pitt"—Fox's "Fragment of History"—What deserves the notice of posterity—Readers desire to know the history of authors whom they read—Many biographies are written drily and barrenly—Autobiography—William Gifford—Bysshe Shelley—Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle—Falsified memoirs—Fame sometimes bestowed where not deserved—Deciduous laurels sought after—True merit—Originality, force, and truth—Absurdity often mistaken for genius—Natural eloquence—Beautiful prose-writers—Sarcasm, vituperation, and ridicule—May silence genius—Bold and firm genius will overcome them—A severe criticism will still prejudice merit—Reviews sometimes beautifully written—Eloquent lament on Byron's death in "Edinburgh Review"—Self-complacence produced by a knowledge of one's place—Discrimination of the powers of Byron and Shelley—There may be happiness without genius or talent—Criticisms often written by malignant enemies—Widespread fame—Bonstetten's remark on Gray—Causes of failure in literature—Authors best paid are therefore most circulated—Bad books sometimes sell well—Fashionable Novels—Proof of fame lies in its endurance—Common minds rarely extend their thoughts beyond their personal experience.

YOUNG'S "Love of Fame, the universal passion" is, in my opinion, his best poem. I cannot bring myself to admire his "Night Thoughts," which appear to me to be all exaggeration. I doubt if I have ever seen the human being who did not

flatter himself that he possessed some quality or acquirement, by which he was entitled to be distinguished. No doubt it is in the generality of cases a mere self-delusion; but in proportion as we are lenient to ourselves, we are severe examiners of the pretensions of others. Proud people deceive themselves; vain people attempt to deceive others, even when they are not themselves deceived. Is it possible for any one to estimate his own talents, or genius, correctly? Many suppose it is not; I think that it is. He knows what passes within him better than others can know; but the doubt is, whether he can form a right judgment upon it. An author's habits of mind may render his own compositions congenial to him; and this may make him find clearness in them, where others find only obscurity; but yet they who are capable of duly criticising the works of others will, at least after long intervals, be capable of criticising their own. He who can detect those in folly who have the credit of wisdom, cannot want talent.

But who is an object of interest to the public? Surely every author is not so. Many authors have no merit at all: some are below the common standard of understanding. It does not require any capacity to make a book. Bishop Tomline made a book on a subject which would have afforded a copiousness of original and profound matter, principally by scissors and paste: and

this was no less than the Life of his great patron, Pitt, who was one of those who long held in their hands the destinies of Europe. But if any one persuades himself that a good book—original, forcible, and just—can be written by any one who has not high and eminent talents, he labours under a strange state of blind error.

Men even of extraordinary and brilliant abilities have not always written good books on subjects which would have seemed most congenial to the public habits of their minds: Charles Fox's "Fragment of History" falls far short of the expectations which that distinguished statesman's genius had raised regarding it. Probably the failure arose from the difference between the processes of speaking and of writing: yet Burke equally excelled in both!—Pitt has given no specimens, by which we may be led to believe that he could have been pre-eminent as an author. The matter of all his speeches is now dead: the spirit evaporated with the tones of his voice. We can cite no general wisdom,—nothing applicable beyond the occasion. Without this there may be talent; without a power of generalisation there cannot be genius.

He who works with effect for posterity is entitled to the remembrance of posterity. But if he tells nothing interesting to posterity beyond what his works have already told, what shall we say? We may desire to know, as an encourage-

ment or warning, how he has been treated by his cotemporaries for what he has done well: we may desire to know his happiness, his misery, and the course and habits of his life; and persuade ourselves we can judge how far accidental circumstances had influence on the developement of his mind. This is on the supposition, that mere facts are all which had not been already told. But no one ever read a book with which he was pleased, without wishing to have some account of the author. There is no curiosity more universal than this.

That occasionally memoirs have been left unwritten of authors who have written good books can only arise from the stupidity, indifference, or false reserve of *soi-disant* friends. What they know themselves, they either think that every one knows, or familiarity has made them insensible to those superior endowments which more distant readers have known how to prize. But if there are many things which others can tell with more impartiality than an author of himself, there are many things which none but himself can relate, or at least none can relate so well. There are very few copious and profound lives of eminent men, to which the persons recorded have not by their own pens afforded a large portion of the materials. Almost all other lives are comparatively dry and barren.

William Gifford rendered his "Translation of Juvenal" a saleable and interesting book by the memoir of himself, which he prefixed to it; and indeed by that memoir brought himself into fame. It is true that his life afforded some extraordinary and piquant adventures, and the memoir was very well written.

What a wild and captivating, though mysterious, memoir would Shelley have written if he had left an account of himself! Ridiculed and neglected while alive, and represented in most of the literary journals as a bye-word of absurdity, charlatanism, and incomprehensibility;—now he is gone, he is lauded up to the skies as a supernatural genius! He *was* a genius, often pursuing a wrong direction and chasing *ignes fatuos:* but the present encomiums of him are extravagant.

Margaret, the wife of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, in the time of Charles II., a voluminous authoress, has given a curious memoir of herself incidentally in one of her most rare works, which was extracted for me, and reprinted at the Lee Priory press. She had written, separately, a very valuable Life of her husband. Horace Walpole endeavours to turn into ridicule those whom he calls a fantastic couple. But the duke was a very important and splendid historical character, as Lord Clarendon's "His-

tory" proves: and though the duchess wrote too much, some of her poetry exhibits talents and even genius.

He who in writing of himself mis-states facts, or exhibits false sentiments or false reasonings, defeats his own purpose; for he shows that he does not deserve the notice which he claims. There will be a sufficient number of impartial judges, able to detect his errors. But is it possible to define the degree of genius or talent, which the public will admit to be entitled to its distinction or notice? The public are capricious, and often decide by whim or accident.

That fame is often bestowed where it is not merited, is quite certain: it may be doubtful whether, where it is merited, it ever fails to be finally admitted. What is not acquired during life, may now and then be erected by posterity over the grave. The fame, which is slow in rising, is the most sure, and the most lasting. It shows most strength and most steadiness of wing. Extravagance and deformity often strike for the moment, but will not bear the eye long upon them; they engage attention sooner than symmetry, but will not retain it. The difficulty is to draw notice to what is full of grace and order: when drawn, it does not recede again.

But such is the love of distinction, that too many would prefer a quick and instant laurel, even though they knew it to be "deciduous."

The truth is, that the people have a natural inclination towards charlatans,—just as a mountebank is the most engaging object in a country fair.

He who expounds sober truths, which touch us in our graver and more reflecting hours, will be esteemed and cherished at last. Nor will there be any final doubts as to the degree and quality of his merit. If he merely repeats from others what has been said before, readers will after a time refer back to the originals, and reject the copies. If he confirms by the original operations of his own mind important verities which others have promulgated, he will be regarded as a valuable collateral testimony: there is a raciness and force in originality, which bears internal evidence of its origin. He who thinks for himself and feels for himself, and thinks accurately and vigorously, and feels amiably and virtuously, and at the same time has the faculty of expressing well what he thinks and feels, cannot be a common man.

What some take to be genius is another name for absurdity — the effect of an insane and irritated imagination. The beauty of imagination lies in its verisimilitude; in its accordance with the native emotions of the heart; in its consistency with the belief of an intelligent and sensitive mind. The wonders of a false magician are only fit for children and fools.

Now and then an author is gifted with a sort of natural eloquence, which has an attraction felt but indescribable, and which seems to throw up incense like the breath of the morning air. Probably this may arise from a flow of high feeling casting its colours upon a richly stored mind, and uttered with a simple frankness which rejects all ornament, and every artificial thought and order. The images that come forth, follow in their natural course; and are associated in a way to which other minds instantly respond. The generality of minds are too much made up of labour and art thus to show themselves in their native state, without an exposure which would disgrace them.

Cowley, Dryden, Addison, Burke, were all writers of melodious prose. Of these Burke was the richest and the most varied: many would add Johnson to these, and perhaps justly, were he not a little too pompous. His "Tour to the Hebrides" is in many parts very noble; and such are several passages in his "Lives of the Poets;" but there is an occasional mixture of vulgarity, pedantry, emptiness, and coarse attempt at familiar humour, for which nature had not fitted him: there are passages of exquisite prose in Gray's "Letters," where he gives a delineation of natural scenery; but there is often something finical in those letters, where he attempts to be familiar. Cowper is delightful from his *naïve* simplicity;

but I do not recollect any thing of high eloquence in his prose.

Nothing of formal composition, written with toil and artifice, can be eloquent; it is always hard and dry. True eloquence has a brightness, as if it had been dipped in the dews of heaven. But instances of this eloquence, of which the charms are permanent, are very rare. Tillotson, South, Seed, Secker, Sterne, Blair, were once thought eloquent; perhaps Richardson was thought so: their fashions are gone by. Bacon cannot be said to be eloquent, though full of wisdom. The heart and the imagination make eloquence.

Most of the books which attract notice at the moment of publication are temporary works, as any one may convince himself by looking into the titles of the articles in the literary reviews of the last thirty years. They are books manufactured to suit the transient curiosity of the public for the day; and noticed to give the reviewers an opportunity of expressing their own opinions on the subjects which they treat. The authors are never heard of again after a year or two; and when the first sale is over, the volumes become waste paper. Among these, a large proportion are travels and voyages, and tracts on party-politics. In any of these works there is seldom any thought, but a mere loose relation of common facts; or battling backwards and forwards of

trite common-place arguments in mean clumsy language.

That violent degree of sarcasm, vituperation, and ridicule, which has been the fashion of criticism during the present century, seems to me highly immoral, and destructive to the best energies of literature. I will not say that its effects may be set at naught by conscious merit: they will undoubtedly lower any author's fame for a time, however unjust; and if he be very sensitive, they may silence him for ever: but if genius is bold and firm, it will by degrees overcome them. One has read criticisms which would at first appear calculated to sink an author's celebrity into annihilation; but we know that such authors have gone on, and after all stand as high as ever, and often higher, in the public eye. But no reader lays down such a review unaffected by it. And there is no work, however excellent, which may not be made to appear either ridiculous, or feeble, or false, by partial selection, perverse juxta-position, or spritely *bon-mots*.

These reviews, however, exhibit sometimes instances of honest and beautiful criticism; and several of this character were written on Byron either in the "Edinburgh Review" or "Quarterly Review," and more especially one by Sir Walter Scott. But at the moment of writing this I put my hand on a passage of the "Edinburgh Review," July, 1824, p. 499, which thus records the

great poet's death. Speaking of the death of Shelley and Keats, it goes on :—

"To this band of immortals a third has been added — a mightier genius, a haughtier spirit, whose stubborn impatience and Achilles-like pride only death could quell. Greece, Italy, the world, have lost their poet-hero; and his death has spread a wider gloom, and been recorded with a deeper awe, than has waited on the obsequies of any of the many great who have died in our remembrance. Even detraction has been silent at his tomb; and the more generous of his enemies have fallen into the rank of his mourners. But he set like the sun in his glory, and his orb was greatest and brightest at the last; for his memory is now consecrated no less by freedom than genius. He probably fell a martyr to his zeal against tyrants. He attached himself to the cause of Greece, and, dying, clung to it with a convulsive grasp, and has thus gained a niche in her history; for whatever *she* claims as hers is immortal, even in decay, as the marble sculptures on the columns of her fallen temples!" This is surely glorious and pathetic eloquence: yet this is he whose outset was treated with the most galling and consummate contempt. Let no high spirit therefore be crushed or silenced by a first criticism.

If any one could fix on certain clear tests by which he should assuredly know his place, his

self-complacence would not be at the mercy of others. Unfortunately the same canons of criticism are by no means universally acknowledged; and many of those which are received are arbitrary and technical. The makers of rules are commonly men of technical minds; for genius judges by feeling, not by rules. The imaginative feelings of Byron and Shelley had but little similitude: those of Shelley were mystical and clouded; those of Byron, clear, distinct, direct, and bold. Shelley was more theoretical and abstract; Byron, however imaginative, had it always mixed up with humanity,—human passions and human forms. Shelley had gleams of poetry; Byron was always poetical: Shelley never put a master's hand upon his subject; he could not mould it to his will.

But it will be asked, whither tends all this uneasiness about genius and talent, and their degrees? Either happiness must be very limited, or the greater part of mankind must be happy without them. But then no one likes to fall short in the career which he enters. But he is not called to enter it unless he is fitted for it: and it may be well in such case that he should be deterred from going on. This, it will be answered, may be;—but what if he who is qualified should be deterred by false criticism? This surely will make him unhappy, when the fire burns within and cannot find vent.

We meet in high authority with the exclamation—"O that mine enemy would write a book!" Are not the severest criticisms often written by a malignant enemy, or jealous rival? If we could try these questions by settled laws, injustice could not be done. But they are so various, that while one acquits with honour, another condemns with infamy.

He who is little known beyond the circle of his personal friends and acquaintance, cannot be said to have a name. Celebrity must have a wide-spread acknowledgement, though few can hope ubiquity. This last can only belong to such aërial spirits as Byron and Scott; but diffident men do not always know the extent of their reputation. Bonstetten told me that as far as he could perceive from Gray's manner and conversation, he had no idea how high his fame stood, or how far it had extended.

There are certain living English authors, with whose names all acquainted with European literature are familiar; such as Southey, Wordsworth, Moore, Campbell, Rogers, Lockhart, Wilson, Brougham, Jeffrey, &c. I pretend to no such honour: it would have gratified me to have dared to hope it.

I have been an enthusiast in literature for fifty years, but without much effect. The causes of my failure I may rather guess, than can precisely ascertain. What my enemies would say, may

easily be guessed: "Why, it is your want of capacity!" This I must assure them is not exactly what I am inclined to admit. Such assertions only excite arrogance on my part,—a defensive arrogance. That my labours have been profitless is no certain proof of their demerit. I have worked for fame, not money; but have got little of what I have worked for: fame comes best through profit. Experience proves this; for publishers will circulate with most diligence what they have paid highest for, and almost always gain most by what costs them most: then one work of an author well sold obtains a high price for the next. Books are read because they are sold; not sold because they ought to be read: what one reads, another thinks he *must* read, that he may qualify himself for conversation. Thus bad books are often read, while good ones are neglected: many books have gone through several editions, which are miserable trash, and which are acknowledged to be so after three or four years, when the novelty and the fashion are gone. Take for instance what have lately been called "the fashionable novels;" they are all gone to the pastry-cooks and trunk-makers.

The proof of merit lies in the admission of a work into the body of the permanent literature of a nation, when it is cited for authority, and fills a vacuum, whence if it was removed, no substitute could easily be found. He who lives for his

own little day is like a butterfly which flutters in the sun with its gaudy colours for a few hours; and then ere night is gone. True literature is for all times and seasons;—not raised in the air like a feather, by the breath of an accidental vapour.

The wisdom of men rarely extends beyond the accidental circumstances in which they are placed. They apply what they are taught to what actually surrounds them, and it is valuable for nothing else; they cannot extend their minds beyond their eyesight, nor their feelings beyond themselves. All their knowledge consists in what can be made to apply to themselves; and even that is borrowed, and exhibits no art of intellect except the mere application. How can such persons write durable books, or books of which the interest is extensive?

CHAPTER XXIV.

Existing collateral relationship no advantage—Lady Caroline Leigh and Lady Catherine Stanhope—John, Earl of Bridgewater—Favours from the royal family—Last Earl of Bridgewater—Mr. Egerton of Tatton—Sir Mark Sykes—Duke of Sutherland—Sir Richard Gamon and Mr. Kearney—Leigh of Addlestrop—Late Marquis of Buckingham—Modern nobility jealous of the old—Pitt's hatred of the old aristocracy—Lord Chatham—Opponents of the Chandos claim—Lord Thurlow at last favourable—Lord Rosslyn—Gibbons, Eliots, and Hardwickes—Samuel Egerton of Tatton—Bishop of Durham—Duke of Bridgewater again—Tuft-hunters—The claim forced the author among new-fangled titles——His native diffidence and shyness—Claimant's conduct—A weak earl fond of being a coachman—Absurd interference of a new peer with erroneous information—"Jacob's Peerage"—Brydges of Keynsham—Author worried and catechised from day to day—His contempt of diners-out—His ambition to be a poet—His person little known—Johnson's ridicule of solitude—Cowley's love of it—Vanity of having a numerous acquaintance—Cowper's employments in solitude—Author's mother fond of company—Her over-graciousness—Young the poet—Men of the world—Author scorns them—To praise solitude with insincerity is mischievous—Real lovers of solitude—Author's prayer of boyhood never to quit the solitude of Wootton—Did not desire seclusion to spend it in selfish idleness.

PERHAPS the pleasure derived from the retrospect of a series of ancestors, who have left a memory behind them, is purely imaginative. No advantage whatever is derived from existing collateral relationship if it be wanted:—if it be not wanted,

it is profuse in flattering professions. I have never received a particle of aid, or friendship, or even civility, from relationship, since at the commencement of manhood I entered into the world;—unless the testimony in favour of our claim by our remote relations, Lady Caroline Leigh and Lady Catherine Stanhope, the sister and first-cousin of the late Duke of Chandos, may be called such. Lord Bridgewater recommended my second son to a cornetcy in his regiment of the 14th Dragoons; but not till the Duke of York had given him a cornetcy in another regiment. Of all the men I ever knew, Lord Bridgewater was the most little-minded. All the kindnesses I have received have been from the royal family;—the Prince Regent, the Dukes of Clarence and Cumberland. I had a few communications with the last Earl of Bridgewater, who—though a very strange man—had ten times the mind of his elder brother, and had a wonderful degree of classical erudition. As to the late Mr. Egerton of Tatton, I knew very little of him: he was not an Egerton by the male line; his mother was sister to my godfather. He was a plain country gentleman, with a very large fortune, which he derived from his maternal uncle; inoffensive, but not brilliant. Of his son, still living, I know still less than I knew of his father; but of Sir Mark Sykes, his first-cousin, who also married his sister, and who, like me, was a collector of rare books, I knew more.

I never saw the late Duke of Bridgewater, and I never spoke to his nephew and heir—the present Duke of Sutherland. I know nothing personally of any of these relations—great in rank, riches, and political power. They may have disclaimed me—I disclaim them all! But I am bound not to forget that I received every civility and assistance from the late Sir Richard Gamon, brother to the last Duchess of Chandos; and from the late Mr. Kearney, who married the late Duke's sister; and also civilities from Mr. Leigh of Addlestrop, Lady Caroline's son. The late Marquis of Buckingham also, while the marriage of his son with the daughter and heiress of the Duke of Chandos was in treaty, received me with many flattering attentions.

That the modern nobility are very jealous of the old is a matter of fact, which persons in the world must be blind indeed not to perceive. Certainly all nobility may be considered modern since the commencement of the last century, and especially since the advancement of Mr. Pitt to the premiership in January, 1784. It would be vain to deny that Mr. Pitt had a hatred of the old peerage; he inherited it from his father, but he had not the same excuse for it as his father had. His father had a great genius and a sublime spirit, and overcame the old aristocracy in a good cause. Mr. Pitt inherited the character of his mind and temper from his mother, with some

infusion of his father's oratory, his father's boldness, and his father's patriotism; but not of his father's imagination or fire. If Lord Chatham had not been a statesman, he would have been a poet: nothing could have made Mr. Pitt a poet.

None of the old nobility opposed the Chandos claim, except the Duke of Norfolk, and his relation and dependent, Lord Suffolk. Two more were made by George II., by purchases from that monarch's mistresses, and the rest by George III.—six of them, many years after the commencement of the claim, including two bishops. Lord Thurlow, though disinclined to the claim at first, became favourable at last. Lord Rosslyn turned right round with Lords Ellenborough and Redesdale, and Auckland; though he had expressed a contrary opinion to Mr. Harvey, our counsel, at one of his levees when he was chancellor.

We had no near relations on my father's side:—the Gibbons, the Eliots, and the Hardwickes, were the nearest; but all acquaintance with them had ceased. My father's life had been entirely spent in the country, in a state of easy independence, though he kept up a correspondence with Charles Yorke till his melancholy death in 1770—a man not perhaps of so strong a mind as Lord Hardwicke, his father, but of more accomplished genius.

My mother's near relation, Mr. Egerton of Tatton, the son of her uncle, though possessing a very large landed estate, and representative for Cheshire in many parliaments till his death, was a plain country gentleman, who was too proud to mix with the fashionable world. He died in 1780, nine years before the claim commenced. The Bishop of Durham died about 1787 : he was reserved, courtly, and little to be depended upon, and his eldest son still less. They were slaves to the world, and all its mean glitters and compliances; bigoted aristocrats, with an affectation of humility, which could deceive none but fools. The Duke of Bridgewater, who died in 1803, was so absorbed in his own canal-projects, that he excluded himself from the world; and, though a very useful and patriotic, was a very eccentric character. Thus unsupported we stood in society.

Solitude was my passion;—of all things, to intrude myself on new acquaintances was most repugnant to me. But to be what we called at Cambridge a tuft-hunter,—a runner after title and rank in the shape of acquaintance,—was worst of all; it made me scorn the servile wretches, who were guilty of such paltry meanness. Pope says,—

> Not therefore humble he who seeks retreat;
> Pride guides his steps, and bids him shun the great!

But now I was called upon to go among these new-fangled titles by daily references to me to disprove and set right some absurd gossipping story, some mischievous invention, circulated out of the House, which some noble lord had swallowed with eagerness, and which he clung to as long as he could possibly keep his hold upon it. Diffident by nature, I do not easily open at a first address; but if roused and provoked, I am apt to grow sometimes a little fierce, rude and peremptory. I was fatigued and angry at having to encounter so many of these absurdities.

The claimant was willing to interfere and take the apparent management as long as things went well; but the instant difficulties were thrown in the way, he lost his self-possession, and threw himself upon me. I knew a noble earl—not of the strongest intellect—who was very fond of coachmanship, and driving his own horses about the streets of London. He generally drove rashly into the most difficult places till he got entangled; but the instant he found himself in an embarrassment, his courage failed him; he threw up the reins, and cried out, "D— it, coachee, now you must get us out!" I was doomed to be coachee in this claim-case; my brother, as in the case of the circular letter, plunged us into voluntary troubles, and then came with a pale face and lamentable voice to me to extricate him

I came down one day to the bar of the Lords, in 1803, when our counsel, and agents, and friends, were waiting to get a committee formed. By some accident I happened to have been detained upon business, and was late. I was met at the door with a clamorous impatience and pallid faces: "Where have you been? we have been wanting you for this hour. Such a thing has happened!" "Why, what has happened?" "Why, here is a noble lord who says he has discovered that Anthony B., under whom we claim, was in truth the ancestor of another branch!" "Of what branch?" "Why, the Keynsham branch! See, there he is; he has got that great folio in his hands, and is busily showing it to all the lords who are waiting about the benches." "O, I see: it is the noble lord who has just been created, and took his seat the other day. But what is the book?"—"Why, 'Jacob's Peerage.'" I laughed, and cried, "Is this all? It will not require five minutes to put an end to such nonsense. First, 'Jacob's Peerage' would be no authority for any thing. Secondly, the mis-statement happens to be one of which the most demonstrative contradiction is at hand. The records of the descent of the Keynsham branch are as positive as who was one's father. There is an unbroken series of epitaphs on them in Keynsham church, from the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Their ancestor, Thomas Bridges, the *brother—not son*—of John, first

Lord Chandos, is marked out by the grants of abbey lands which he got at the Reformation, all which are detailed in all the editions of 'Collins's Peerage;' and his own epitaph on a brass-plate exists in the church of Cornbury in Oxfordshire. His son Henry, to whom these estates descended, has an epitaph at Keynsham. And here comes a catch-penny book, making a loose statement without a single detail or authority, brought under the arm of a new peer, who has not heard one syllable of our evidence; and is this to overturn us?—is this what has put you into such consternation?" I take for granted what I said was soon communicated among these busy lords, for I heard no more of this absurd discovery, or of the noble lord's big folio. But the noble lord, without giving us an opportunity of openly refuting him, voted in the majority against the claim. I suppose that he hugged his authority in secret; perhaps made it his pillow to dream upon. His lordship was a lucky man: he was gorged with the spoils of public money, and therefore might sleep sound from repletion!

I was thus worried from day to day—not seeking society among these would-be great men, that I might be catechised, and advantage, if such should occur, be taken of such extra-jurisdictional examinations. Most of these prosperous persons are gone to their graves, with their lately-blazoned coronets bright as new, and be-

decking every where their coffins and their hearses. My social habits were not with such men; and if my collateral blood neglected me, I could be as proud and as reserved as they. I knew nothing of the Gowers, and the Carlisles, and the Jerseys, and their coteries. . I did as Byron afterwards did, and spurned them all! I had no wit, like Moore or Sterne, "to set the table in a roar;" and my vanity did not lie in having my table covered with visiting-cards of sounding titles of dukes, duchesses, and marquises, &c. whether new or old. The nature of my mind and temper, the habits of my childhood, my confirmed pursuits, my morbid diffidence—perhaps my unbending pride—led me to a contemplative and secluded life. The consciousness of the blood that flowed in my veins, my indignation, my disgust, all added to this retiredness. I had no desire to be a man known in the clubs, and *soirées*, and streets of London. My ambition was to be a poet—a poet of solitude and sentiment—not a diner-out. I loved books with an intensity of fondness; they were my employment, my recreation, my food. My personal acquaintances were limited to a small number, for I sought the acquaintance of no one. To those who sought me with kindness I was ever open. I loved literary conversation, when it could be had without seeking it; but I could not bring

myself to pay the price of a visit, a bow, or a smile, for it.

No man's person has been less known in society than mine; and perhaps my name has been almost as little known.

Johnson ridicules those praises of solitude which break out from the heart of Cowley, as if they were insincere. Because he hated solitude himself, he thought no one else could love it. Cowley had lived in the bustle of a court, and seen all its falsehoods and impertinences. We may be sick of our own thoughts at last, and perhaps require some change; but no one who knows the force of language can doubt Cowley's sincerity, unless he be blind with prejudice. There is scarcely any great poet who has not sung the praises of solitude with earnestness.

Nothing is so common as the vanity of having a great number of acquaintance; and there can scarcely be a sillier vanity: it implies a hard obtrusiveness and a vacant mind. If we thus gained a knowledge of characters, we should gain something; but we thus see only the surface of mankind, and we habituate ourselves by the flutter of passing objects and transient views to lose all discrimination. A weak mind seeks thus to fill a vacuum, and thereby adds to its natural weakness.

Solitude may indeed be partly occupied by trifles. Cowper employed part of his time in

making bird-cages and boxes for tame hares; but then how gloriously he busied other portions of his time! My mother delighted in company; and I used to argue with her from a child in favour of a solitary life, till she sometimes grew angry. She loved conversation, and talked well. She had, besides, an easy address, and those manners which won attention. She had none of the offensive haughtiness which, as I have heard, belonged to her father; yet she was not without a sense of her high blood, which now and then she showed by a small degree of over-graciousness. She lived in company to the last; but in her eighty-second year her faculties had been decaying for at least a year or two, and her judgment and clearness of mind were no longer the same. She survived my father twenty-nine years. At her death I was forty-seven years old. Her favourite authors were Pope, Waller, and Young—next to Shakspeare. Young was a friend and fellow-collegian of her father. Of Waller she of course heard from her infancy at Penshurst, where she was born.

I have heard great praises of that sort of person who is called a man of the world, and great contempt of any genius which does not entitle itself to combine this character with it. Now it does seem to me, that it is almost an incompatible combination. A man of the world is a man of craft, petty etiquette, frivolousness, falsehood, and self-interest:—he cannot think for himself; he

cannot abstract himself; he cannot have elevated thoughts, but must always keep his eyes upon the ground. Now, if this be true, how can he be a man of genius?

Others may dispute that these are the attributes of a man of the world. They may say that it only means a man of good sense and judgment, who knows the characters and usages of mankind in action, and conforms to them. This will not help them out of their difficulty:—if he conforms to what is mean, vicious, and faithless, he must himself be all these. If he is one who seeks truth and wisdom, and embraces them, he is not a man of the world; and if he does not do so, he is not a man of genius. Look at the characters of all the men of genius on record, and see if one of them had the petty watchfulness and vulgar flexibility of a man of the world.

I would have scorned the vanity, if it be a vanity, of being a man of the world:—a man of the world has always been too cunning for me, and over-reached me. But many think it the height of praise. There were some who, for their own wicked purposes, carried on this discussion with my mother in the last twilight of her declining days. I was represented as one wandering out of the world, and whose high-flown ideas rendered me unfit for the conduct of human affairs.

But if a doubt can be plausibly raised, whether

a man of the world is a better man than a man of genius, I presume it will not be contended that men of genius ought therefore to be crushed. There must be a variety of characters in the world, though one be more useful and desirable than another.

He who talks and writes fine essays on solitude, and yet is always uneasy out of society, holds out false lights and deceitful lessons to the world. We desire, therefore, to know what have been the real feelings and habits of an author who puts forth such sentiments and opinions. We are sure that Milton, and Cowley, and Gray, and Beattie, and Cowper, loved solitude, and cannot doubt that Dante and Petrarch loved it. Evelyn loved it, though he wrote an essay against it; and Zimmerman loved it, as well as praised it.

Let no one suspect me of affectation, when I have breathed out my passion for solitude. I did not love the world before I knew it; I love it much less now that I know it. I would rather live among the humours of my own creations. I prayed in my boyhood never to be drawn away from the fields, and valleys, and woods of Wootton; and nothing disturbed me so much even in those days as visiters: but in almost every wish of my life I have been crossed. I should have liked to have been like Claudian's "Old Man of Verona," which Cowley has translated so beautifully; or like those "rude forefathers of the vil-

lage," whom Gray describes in his "Elegy." I should have avoided an uninterrupted series of vexations and mistifications; but the fire of ambition is still difficult to controul, and might at times have blazed out, or smouldered inwardly with more danger.

But if this seclusion had been spent in a selfish idleness; if I had left to posterity no memorial of my being, and left the world "a prey to dumb forgetfulness;" could I in that case have reconciled myself to such a tenor of humble and safe but useless quiet? It may be answered, what is the use of a few books; and who can presume to assure himself that the fruit of his labours has been worth the cost? But it is something to have attempted good works with an honest energy. May not profound literary productions be better brought forth in the silence of retirement than in the noise of society?

CHAPTER XXV.

Author's fondness for the old aristocracy natural—Old aristocracy respected by the people — National debt and taxation have nearly destroyed it — Produce of the soil is the chief wealth — Dr. Chalmers's book on "Political Economy"—Rent—Old peerage—Extraordinary passages from "Cobbett's Register" in favour of the old nobility, and against the modern monied interest, and exclaiming against the bad passions of *parvenus*—A great fund of good sense, sagacity, and truth, in these passages—Proclamation of James I.—Cheshire the garden-plot of ancient gentry—Barons of the earls palatine of Chester—Egertons and Cholmondeleys—Masseys and Tattons—Tatton Park and its owners—Ancient family of Mainwaring of Pever—Their high quality proved by their intermarriage with a co-heir of the earls palatine of Chester—Memorable dispute between Sir Thomas Mainwaring and Sir Peter Leicester as to this marriage—Tried by a feigned issue at law and established—The death of Sir Henry Mainwaring, the last of the family of Pever, in 1797—Present possessors of the estate and name adopted by Sir Henry, and only related to him by his mother—Their own name Whetenhall, or Whittenhall.

It is natural for me to have a fondness for the old aristocracy of England, and to feel a disgust at the modern dilutions of it with infusions from the dregs of the people, and more especially from monied *parvenus*. I cannot doubt that the old

nobility were a body useful to the people, and respected and beloved by them. Time has made old nobility: a job and a minister's smile can make a new noble; and the people will neither respect nor love him, nor scarcely endure him. The national debt and the monied interest have exhausted the country, and drawn away all the strength and fruits of the soil to be consumed elsewhere than on the spot and its neighbourhood. It is the produce of the soil which is wealth, as unsophisticated reason demonstrates; and as Dr. Chalmers, in his late work, has admirably explained and enforced. Increase of rent therefore is a necessary consequence of the increase of wealth; and he who would pull down rent must at the same time pull down wealth to effect his purpose. Any artificial wealth can only be bought by the fruits of the earth: it can only be acquired by being first paid for. But it is not my purpose to enter here into the doctrine of rent, which, up to this day, has been most mischievously represented.

I say that the old peerage stood upon ancient nobility of blood and ancient rents. But rents are now become almost nominal, for they are drawn away again in taxation to feed the overgorged Stock Exchange. On the day of writing this chapter, — 3rd July, 1833, — I have been greatly amused to meet with the same opinions,

expressed with his usual boldness, force, and sagacity, by a popular writer, from whom the mob of readers would least have expected it. It is from "Cobbett's Register," in his Letter to the People of Oldham.

"If," says he, "the lords were wise, they would see that their danger arises from the very class that set up an outcry against the radicals. The further men are removed from them, the less envy they have of them; that it is not the artisan and the labourer that look with an evil eye on the lords' town-house, and on his country mansion and park; but the money-monger in the town, and the great swelled-up bull-frog farmer in the country. I have known for many years, and have been a strict observer of all classes of men in this country, and I have never heard amongst common tradesmen, little farmers, artisans, or labourers, any thing indicating a wish to see the nobility pulled down: but amongst those — amongst the *parvenus*, as the French call them, I have seen one portion aiming at getting to the height of the nobility; and have seen those who despair of ever doing that, always trying to pull them down. The liberals, or those that the French call *doctrinaires*, a race whom I hate, (oh God, how I hate them!) are always talking in the same strain; one of their sayings being, that 'men are not born legislators.' Why, to be sure they are not; but that is not the question: the

question, and the only question, is, whether such an institution be, taking the defects along with the advantages, for the good of the people among whom it exists? For ourselves, we know that our country has enjoyed a greater degree of greatness, — of good living, — of easy and happy life, for a greater number of years, than any other country in the world; and we know, besides, that this institution has been in existence all the while. This is no reason why its abuses should not be corrected; why its encroachments should not be put an end to: but it is a reason, and a sufficient reason, for restraining us from condemning the institution altogether.

"The reform constituency is precisely the thing to pull down the nobles. It must produce, if it continue for any length of time, an untitled aristocracy of wealth, and particularly wealth consisting of mere money. This is inevitable while thirty millions a year are raised in the country to be given to mere money-holders. It is precisely among this species of constituency that you find all the real and settled enemies of the House of Lords. The working people, the common tradesmen and farmers, have none of the envies that bother the brains of this monied tribe; the change that they want is a change from bad living to good living: a single thought about the change of the constituent parts of the state has never, even by accident, come athwart

their minds: they take the country as they found it with respect to matters of government; and if they have the means of leading these happy lives, to which their virtues and their industry entitle them, I defy all the *feelosophers* and liberals that the devil ever sent upon earth, to persuade them that there ought not to be lords, or that there ought to be any change at all in the government.

"Who is so blind as not to see that the infernal phalanx of money has been casting its eyes all around it to see on what it shall first lay its claws? The 'respectable constituency' has begun by handing over a part of the church of Ireland,—only a little gentle bite; a mere snack to begin with,—*l'appétit vient en mangeant;* or, as we say—eating is like scratching, only wanting a beginning. This little snack will give a relish for a full meal; and now the money-monster is casting its greedy Jew-eyes over the whole of the church of England. I know not what scheme; but in the end, directly or indirectly the scheme, be it what it may, will tend to transfer the wealth of the church into the hands of the monstrous money-monger. Having that in his maw, there will remain nothing but the estates of the nobles; and here is 'a reformed constituency' precisely calculated to hand those over also to the monster. It is clear as day-light that

the struggle between these landed estates and the funds has been going on for several years.

"A *doctrinaire* is never at rest while there is any thing in existence that is more than a twelve-month old. He is everlastingly talking of 'the improvements of the age,' and the 'march of intellect,' and about 'institutions keeping pace with the age.' He has a great hatred of 'prejudices,' and of 'nationality:' for free trade in every thing else, he is for free trade in national likings, and even in allegiance. Any thing having existed in former times is with him *prima facie* evidence that it ought not to exist now. Above all things he is distinguished for his disregard and contempt for provender for the belly and the back; except his *own* belly and his *own* back, which he is very willing to furnish out of the labour of those whom he dooms to live upon water-porridge or potatoes, being however always ready to supply them with ample *food for their minds* out of his inexhaustible store-house of 'Useful Knowledge' and of 'Penny Magazines.' It is a curious fact that, within these four or five years, no less than four corn-mills, in the neighbourhood of Uxbridge, and several in the neighbourhood of Maidstone, have been turned into paper-mills! One would think that the poor souls had actually taken to eating the books. What a fine prospect for the *doctrinaires!*"

In all this there is assuredly a great fund of sound sense, sagacity, and truth. There is no doubt that the large establishments, the hospitality, and the rural residence of the ancient nobility and gentry, contributed to the comfort, happiness, and due subordination of the people. The money spent by fundholders encourages a vicious, unhealthy, and turbulent population. James I. issued proclamations to drive back all the gentry from London to their country-seats. These proclamations, which may be found in Rushworth, are very curious, for they point out these absentees by name.

The county where there ever have been, and are still, the most ancient gentry, is Cheshire. Its distance from the capital is one reason; but other counties equally distant are not in this respect in the same state: there must therefore be some other co-operative cause. One reason I presume to have been, that it has not been a manufacturing county. As a considerable portion of my own blood is made up from this county, I am familiar with its pedigrees. The earls palatine of Chester had their court of barons, of whom a list is given by Dugdale, under that earldom. The Egertons and Cholmondeleys are sprung from the same male stock, who were barons of Malpas. The Tattons are supposed, with reason, to be a younger branch of another of these barons — the Masseys, who possessed anciently

the lordship of Tatton; but which, in later times, was the property of Lord Chancellor Egerton, and thence came to my great-grandfather Thomas Egerton, who died 1685, younger son of John, second earl of Bridgewater. His grandson, Samuel Egerton, M. P. for Cheshire, having lost his only daughter a few months before his death, devised it, after his sister's death, to her son William Tatton of Withenshaw, who took the name of Egerton, and was father of the present Wilbraham Egerton, Esq. of Tatton, late M. P. for Cheshire.

One of these barons of the earls palatine of this county was of the ancient family of Mainwaring of Pever. About their early quality a memorable contest happened in the reign of Charles II. between the head of this house and Sir Peter Leicester, the Cheshire historian. It appeared by an authentic document, that they stood so high that they had married a co-heir of the last of these earls palatine, Hugh Kevelive, Earl of Chester, and accordingly always quartered their arms. Sir Peter Leicester, probably from provincial jealousy, took it into his head to contend that this co-heir must have been illegitimate. A war of pamphlets took place between the two baronets, all of which are now very scarce and very curious. It ended in a trial at law on a feigned issue, and a verdict was given in favour of the legitimacy of this ancestress of Sir Thomas Mainwaring, on the

ground of a deed of frank-marriage by the earl to this daughter, as a dowry to Mainwaring, because it was held to be law that gifts in frank-marriage could only take place where the daughter was legitimate.

Sir Henry Mainwaring of Pever, the last baronet of the elder branch, &c. died unmarried 1797. He left his ancient estates and the name to the heir of his mother, who re-married a Whetenhall, by whom she had Thomas Whetenhall, or Wittenhall, who took the name of Mainwaring, and was father of Henry, created a baronet 12th May, 1804, and married Sophia, sister of Lord Combermere, by whom he has a son, Harry, who married in February, 1732, Emma, eldest daughter of the late William Tatton, Esq. of Wittenshaw.

Neither I nor Mr. Lodge can trace any descendants now remaining from Sir Randle Mainwaring, elder brother of Edmund Mainwaring, and uncle of Sir William Mainwaring; so that it seems I am a co-representative of this most ancient and honourable family with Mr. Egerton of Tatton, who is descended from my grandfather Egerton's elder brother. See "Stemmata Illustria," Paris, 1826. fol. p. 42.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Jurisdiction of the Lords over rights of peerage—Le Marchant's Report of the Banbury case—History of the successive claims—Arguments of Lords Redesdale and Ellenborough from alleged non-claim—Lord Erskine's refutation both of the facts and the conclusions—Romilly, to the same effect—Strange inference of Lord Redesdale from the Crown's refusal of a reference in 1727—Extract from Lord Redesdale's speech—Remarks on it—*Soit droit fait*—Law of adulterine bastardy—The probable fact as to the claimant's descent—Old rule of law as to such facts—Lord Nottingham's decision on Lord Purbeck's case—Resolution of Lords' committee no judgment—Attempted act to bastardize the claimant's ancestor—The Court of Parliament has no original jurisdiction, but is only a court of appeal—The Lords' committee not the Court of Parliament—A profound and eloquent extract from Lord Erskine's speech—Another from Romilly's speech—Gossip out of court—This case has established the modern law of adulterine bastardy—Honest report of Attorney-General Gibbs—What would have been the result of the Banbury case, if tried in a court of law—If a Lords' resolution is not final, still it prejudices—Lord Holt's declaration of the law on this subject—How can the *soit droit fait* be obtained?—A Lords' committee has no jurisdiction either by the common law or by statute—Misery of uncertainty in the law—Lord Redesdale's abilities—His "Collections of the Dignity of a Peer"—His conduct in the Lisle claim.

LET no one think that, if I dwell upon the jurisdiction and laws by which the inheritance to a peerage ought by the English constitution to be

protected, and that if I return to it as circumstances recall my attention to so important a subject, I am going out of my way in a memorial of my own life.

In looking again and again at the curious and authentic materials afforded by Le Marchant's excellent Report of the late Banbury case, annexed to the Gardner claim, I find more and more topics for consideration, regret, and astonishment. The subject requires the space of a volume, rather than of a chapter or two. I must therefore still only attempt cursory remarks.

On June 6th, 1661, Nicholas, Earl of Banbury, presented his first petition. On February 23rd, 1669, he presented his second petition. In June, 1685, his son, Charles, Earl of Banbury, presented a third petition. On December 13th, 1692, he presented a fourth petition. In 1697, he presented a fifth petition. In 1711, he presented a sixth petition. In 1727, the heir presented a seventh petition. In 1806, William, the heir, now living, presented the eighth petition.

Upon the seventh petition, 1727, the King refused to refer it again to the House, on the opinion of Lord Hardwicke, then attorney-general, that such reference was at the option of the Crown and a matter of expedience, and not of right. All these facts were before the House: yet the allegation of non-claim is urged, both by Lord Redesdale and Lord Ellenborough, against

the right. "The claimant in 1727," says Lord Redesdale, "not having taken any steps upon the rejection of the petition, the farther lapse of time before the last application gives additional weight to the presumption against the claim."—"It has been urged," says Lord Ellenborough, "with great force by a noble Lord, (Redesdale,) that the very remote date of the cause of this discussion is alone fatal to the claim."

On the contrary, Lord Erskine justly says:—"Lapse of time ought not in any way to prejudice the claimant; for what *laches* can be imputed in a case where there has been continual claim? Nicholas, the second Earl of Banbury, presented his petition as soon as there was a monarch on the throne to receive it; and a series of claims have been kept up by his issue to the present hour."

Sir Samuel Romilly says:—"The report of Lord Hardwicke was merely to prevent a repetition of the disagreeable contest that had taken place between two superior courts. It referred wholly to the dispute between the judges and the Lords. At that time it would have been most impolitic to agitate such a question."

Yet Lord Redesdale says that the claimant, when refused a reference in 1727, ought not to have acquiesced; and, by acquiescing, he lost his claim. What could he do?—how could he help himself? "Why," says Lord Redesdale, "he

ought to have complained to the Lords, that the Crown had denied him justice!"—What! have complained to the very body who had obstinately reported to the Crown, that their former resolution was a final judgment in this very case,—and in respect to whose jealous opinion on the subject the Crown refused another reference at the claimant's petition! This is so extraordinary, that nothing less than the noble Lord's own words, of which the report was corrected by himself, could obtain credit for it—(see Le Marchant, p. 453.):—

"I cannot approve of the conduct of Lord Holt upon this occasion. The House acted with great propriety. Suppose a person claim the privilege of peerage and to be tried by his peers, and the House determine that he is not so entitled, and he still pleads the fact; if the attorney-general take issue on that fact, it would come to be tried before a jury, and they might decide that he was so entitled,—which would place the House in an awkward position, while the delinquent would not be tried at all. I consider the abandonment of the proceedings in 1727 as an abandonment of the claim. If a petition were presented to the Crown in the nature of a writ of right, claiming lands, and the crown refuse to act on the petition, and refer the question of right to trial in the ordinary way, I conceive the Crown would do wrong if the claimant showed a ground of right in his

petition; and in 1727 the claimant might have petitioned the House upon rejection of his petition by the Crown. It would have been the constitutional duty of the House, as well as its duty to itself and its members, when informed of that rejection, to have inquired whether the Crown had been rightly advised on this subject."

Now this advice was given by this very House itself, and pertinaciously adhered to; for this House having rejected the claimant's petition in 1692, and Lord Holt having decided this rejection to be invalid, the claimant presented a petition to the Crown urging this decision of Lord Holt; and the petition being referred to the Lords, they, in their answer to his Majesty, set forth their former proceedings, and concluded, "that the judgment come to by the Lords on the said petition, they had great reason to believe was not made known to his Majesty at the time of his making the said reference." Would the Lords, then, have interfered to set aside their own resolution,—of which resolution Lord Redesdale was himself, at the time he uttered this opinion, the zealous defender? But this is the way in which Lord R. always uses suicidal arguments, never being able to make two arguments hang together.

There remained, it is true, the *soit droit fait* to petition for; but it is clear that the Crown, having the fear of the Lords before its eyes, would delay to the last extremity before it granted that

remedy. I suppose it was the conviction of this reluctance on the part of the Crown which made the claimant's counsel advise him to petition for another reference to the Lords, which they might hope would turn out in the nature of a new trial. They were mistaken: the new committee resolved to support the resolution of the ancient one.

The committee having now agreed to enter again on the case, though very unwillingly, the law of adulterine bastardy came again under full discussion, though it had been supposed that it had been already settled for centuries. It had been held that "all matter was irrelevant which was only argumentative to prove the bastardy." By the resolution of the Lords on the Banbury case this doctrine was now overturned. The opinion of the eleven judges was taken on the abstract question of law; but it does not seem to me that that opinion bears out the resolution agreed to by the committee in this case.

It is most probable that, in point of fact, the claimant's ancestor was the son of Lord Vaux, and not of the countess's husband, William, first Earl of Banbury; but this was merely argumentative bastardy. The earl actually cohabited with the countess; there had been no separation, or even proof of quarrel. The countess's conduct in concealing the children was not decisive, though suspicious. If her very certificate could not bastardize a child, how could such suspicious acts

bastardize it? One wrong act might lead to another: having committed the first error, the rest might follow; and the nephew might take advantage of this concealment to seize the entailed estates; and then the children being infants, the countess had not courage to take acts to disseize. The law had hitherto deemed it dangerous to rely upon such circumstances and inferences. If the claim had for the first time been brought forward after a long lapse of years, when the cotemporaries and witnesses were all dead, the case would have had a different aspect.

The case of Lord Purbeck,—of whom his alleged grandfather disowned the father, and in favour of whom Lord Nottingham decided,—seems to me, in some respects, a stronger case; for here the grandfather denied the father to be his son upon oath; and he was christened by the name of Robert Wright, and not Villiers; and his mother was strongly charged with adultery. Romilly calls this one of the most important cases ever agitated in the House, and argued by the most eminent lawyers. The grandfather's wife (mother of this Robert) was daughter of Sir Edward Coke. On the death of George, the second Duke of Buckingham, this claimant became Earl of Buckingham. In point of fact, there is no doubt that his father was not son of the first Viscount Purbeck, his alleged grandfather.

In this Banbury case there can be no rational

doubt that the resolution of the Lords' committee was not a judgment; but as the law Lords in this case set up and resolved a new doctrine of law with regard to adulterine bastardy, it is to be feared that a court of law would give very little relief by again oversetting that new doctrine.

The committees on the first two petitions resolved that, in law, the claimant was legitimate; and then they attempted to get rid of the claim, by an act of parliament to bastardize him: and when this would not do, the House refused to confirm the reports of its committees; and then one of the noble Lords endeavoured to raise an argument upon this, that if the resolution of the committee was not a judgment, the vote of the whole House was. But where was the jurisdiction of the whole House in such a case? The Lords have no jurisdiction as a court, but upon appeal, and as a *dernier resort*.

I take the following passage from Lord Erskine's speech to be most just, most argumentative, most profound, and most happily expressed:—

"It appears to me of the first importance that the law by which this case is to be decided should be accurately laid down. The facts of the case are only of importance with reference to the law; and any conclusion that may be drawn from them which is not applicable to the law, is equally idle and irrelevant. If a former committee endeavoured, in their resolutions on this

claim, to distinguish the law from the fact, they cannot be too severely censured, as nothing could be more opposed to justice than such a distinction. Legitimacy in law, and legitimacy in fact, cannot be at variance; they are in every respect identical, and the apparent ground of distinction between them originates in an erroneous notion of the idea they purpose to convey. Legitimacy is the creature of law, and the term has no other meaning than that which is affixed to it by law. It is the designation of a particular *status*, the qualities of which have been enumerated and defined by law, as best adapted to preserve the order and security of society. When a question of legitimacy arises, and the claimant has proved the facts which constitute his legal title, whatever suspicions may exist to the contrary, the verdict must be given in his favour. These facts may be very far from convincing the judge that the claimant was actually begotten by his ostensible father; yet the judge has no alternative, for the claimant has fulfilled the conditions prescribed by the law. The province of the judge has been circumscribed by the lawgiver, and it would be a breach of his duty, were he to extend his inquiry beyond the limits within which the question is confined."

Among the striking passages in Sir Samuel Romilly's argument is the following:—

"If any of the peers had known any facts prejudicial to Nicholas, they would probably have

declared them. It was their duty to have given their knowledge as witnesses, and not as judges. Nothing could be more criminal than to allow their private prepossessions to influence their judgments. They were not justified in depriving him of the state and condition to which he was born, by any other than legal means; and it was illegal to see or hear any thing relative to the case out of the court in which it was tried."

This openness of the ears to gossip out of court is inseparable to committees which sit by frequent adjournments, and are composed of miscellaneous members; and therefore renders them a very inconvenient and unsafe tribunal for trying facts.

The Banbury case is considered by the lawyers of the utmost importance, as establishing the modern doctrine of adulterine bastardy; but it excites other considerations not less important, which have been hitherto comparatively little attended to. In this chapter, and in my "Lex Terræ," I have endeavoured to draw notice to them; and I must still prolong my remarks a little farther.

I consider the report in 1808 of Sir Vicary Gibbs, the attorney-general, to have been a very honest report; but he evades one question on which it would have been well that he should have brought himself to be explicit. He reports that he is bound by the authority of Lord Holt's

judgment to declare that the Lords' resolution in 1692 was not conclusive against the petitioner; but he does not say by what court or jurisdiction it was to be remedied or reconsidered. As an excuse for this, it must be confessed that, on a nice examination of the wording of the petition, this point is there also evaded; probably the petitioner's counsel deeming it expedient so to do, that the Lords might not be irritated into an unfavourable humour in the commencement, by an attempt to revive the question of their jurisdiction,—the point which the petition has selected to dwell upon being a want of reference from the crown. Now this was the least important of all the grounds of Lord Holt's decision. If there be an appeal, the usual and safe way is an appeal to another tribunal.

Let us consider what the probable difference of effect would have been, if this Banbury case had been tried in a court of law. There the judge is, to use Lord Ellenborough's own expression, "chained to the law." He cannot swerve from it in the face of an intelligent and experienced Bar; and if he does swerve from it, his decision may be set aside on the ground of misdirection. Is this so in the case of a resolution of a Lords' committee? If the resolution is not controllable by a court of law, then there is no appeal; and Lord Holt observes that it is the essence of the English laws, and he believes of the laws of all

countries, to allow appeals. Was the Lords' resolution in this case conformable to the law as pronounced by the opinion of the eleven judges upon the questions laid before them? After reading over the answers of the judges attentively several times, I say not. If then, instead of being a Lords' resolution, it had been a legal decision, there would have been ground for an appeal. The arguments of the law Lords in this case were in many respects such as it appears to me that they would not have used in a court of law. They would not have there called in question Lord Coke's authority, or Lord Holt's judgment. But suppose a judge had done this in his direction to a jury,—that he had told them to keep in mind that if they found for the plaintiff they would injure their own interests;—would not this have been a ground for a new trial at once? Yet Lord Redesdale set out with warning the peers, that if they resolved in favour of the claimant, most of themselves would lose a step of precedence in the peerage.

Will it then be contended that, admitting a Lords' resolution not to be conclusive, no harm can be done by a reference in the first instance to the opinion of a Lords' committee? Is there no injury in the expense and the delay? But that is the least of the evils. If the objections here noticed to the modes of proceeding in those committees are valid, is there not a great chance that

the case may be deeply prejudiced in such a committee? Would such a case come entire and untainted before a court of law? Such a magnanimous mind as Lord Holt's might have cast all prejudices away; but what other judicial mind would do so?

Lord Holt says, that on a petition of right, it is usual for the Crown to refer the case for the opinion of the Lords, where the petitioner consents; but that he has the option of refusing, and is not bound by that opinion, but is entitled in the first instance to the *soit droit fait*, as a matter which is *debitum justitiæ*:—and it must be so, if Magna Charta and a series of confirmatory statutes, down to the statute which enacted the Bill of Rights in the time of Charles I., be binding.

The question will then arise, how the *soit droit fait* can be obtained if the Crown is reluctant to grant it? One is willing to suppose, that when the Crown is convinced of what the law is, it will not put it at defiance, nor withhold from any subject his rights; but that, hitherto, its reluctance has arisen from a misapprehension of the law, and partly perhaps to have no contest with the Lords, who have shown themselves so extremely desirous to establish their claim to this jurisdiction. But *fiat justitia, ruat cœlum!*

There can be no new jurisdiction over the rights of the people established, except by act of parliament. Where is the act which establishes

a Lords' committee as a court of judicature! Do they plead ancient usage and prescription?—It is a comparatively modern practice. Queen Elizabeth took the opinion of two or three commissioners, whom she named. As late as Charles II. the Fitzwalter case was referred to the privy council. If they had a colour to support their claim of jurisdiction, why was not a writ of error brought to attempt to reverse Lord Holt's judgment?

I cannot look upon all the bearings of this case without a feeling of the most painful insecurity in which the law so administered places a subject's dearest rights. Lord Holt exclaimed, "*Misera est servitus ubi jus est vagum et incertum!*"

I can scarcely suppose that Lord Redesdale would have given a sanction to his speech on this occasion by correcting it himself, if he had seen all its bearings: and if he did not see them, where was his reason and his common sense? The qualifications of one who held the offices of attorney-general, speaker, and lord chancellor of Ireland, are fit subjects for the discussion of history. How he acquired these elevations is matter of surprise to me. He was laborious, but his talents were below mediocrity. He saw every thing detached and in confusion: he was so eager to make out the point of the moment, that he paid no attention to what went before and would come after. Nicolas makes the same criticisms on his

voluminous and indigested collections, "On the Dignity of a Peer of the Realm." They are the most chaotic and unintelligible mass which was ever piled together. He was slow and drawling; Lord Ellenborough was as violent and loud.

In the Lisle case, Lord Redesdale acted with the same temper and tenor; but the points at issue were not of such general importance to a subject's rights. There is some comfort in finding companions in our sufferings; and thus the recollection of this noble Lord's hostility to the Chandos claim becomes a little softened. There he contended that a woman who described herself in a will—which he himself produced as his own evidence—as a widow, was in fact a single woman; because, if she was a widow, it would not answer the purpose for which he produced it. Every one must see what faith would be due to the remainder of an instrument, which, before it could be used, must be admitted to have set out with an essential falsehood.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Author endowed with a busy mind—A wandering intellect—Mediocrity ought to be proscribed—An author should not be at the caprice of public opinion—No good writer has been finally neglected—Old literature requires revival—Moral topics not exhaustible—To secure vendibility the public taste must be consulted—To secure consistency of thoughts they must be committed to writing—Extract from "Edinburgh Review"—Happiness derived from rectitude of thought and sentiment—Independence, loftiness and originality—Time is always evolving new truths—Difference of opinion as to genius and ability—Necessity of freedom from local prejudices—Benefit of the crusades—Duties of an author—Citation from an anonymous poem.

It has pleased Providence to endow me with a mind always busy, and a passion to attempt to bring light out of darkness. I endeavour to draw out truths by new combination, exposition, and illustration. I have a wandering intellect; but it may be as well for some purposes as if it was more formal and regular. He who adds nothing to the stock of knowledge, or at least innocent and elegant amusement, is an useless author. Mediocrity may not be so bad in other departments as in poetry; but still it ought to be proscribed.

Yet an author ought not to be at the mercy of the capricious opinion of the public, taken up

at its first impulses. Such an opinion is often wrong; and it may call that mediocrity which is the reverse. Yet it is strange if deep thought and glowing sentiment should appear to any one like mediocrity. Sometimes, however, it is so.

Yet it does not seem to me that any good writer has been finally neglected, though the notice may only have been bestowed on his grave. The evil of such deferred notice is very blighting and very cruel. But who can command the public mind? One might as well attempt to command the winds.

All old literature is like a dead letter, unless it is revived and applied by modern literature. It is not sufficient that truths have been explained ages ago;—they must be explained again, clothed in new words, and confirmed by new observation. Concurrence of thought is not borrowing. Moral topics will never be exhausted; nor will imagination ever have finished all which it may create.

But, for the purpose of vendibility, the public taste and appetite must be consulted. To that ordeal the most important subjects are not the most catching. It requires what bears upon the interests and passions of the moment. It does not find sufficient excitement in past times, or remote prospects, or general truths, and thus authors are at the public mercy; for who can long continue to print what no one will buy? There

have been lately so many stimulants in the politics of the day, that they absorb all literature. The people are not at leisure for airy speculations and ideal pleasures.

But still he whose destiny has chained him to the task will find some means to persevere. No one can be sure of the consistency of his thoughts and feelings who does not commit them to writing. We wander away so gradually from our past impressions, that we do not perceive the disagreement but by nice comparison. It is better to live on bread and water than to suppress the free vigour of the mind. The "Edinburgh Review," in the article on Lady Morgan's "Life of Salvator Rosa," says—"There are few works more engaging than those which reveal to us the private history of individuals. The great charm of biography consists in the individuality of the details, the familiar tone of the incidents, the bringing us acquainted with the persons of men whom we have formerly known only by their works or names, the absence of all exaggeration or pretension, and the immediate appeal from theories to facts."

The happiness or patient endurance of human life depends more on the rectitude and elevation of thought and sentiment, than on the outward circumstances which are called realities. There is, therefore, no knowledge or instruction so essential and primary as moral and psychological know-

ledge. The inequality of conditions, which arises necessarily out of the nature of things as arranged by Providence, can only thus be solaced and reconciled. There is a weakness in the human mind which has too great a tendency to bend servility to riches, pomp, rank, and power. There may be loftiness without arrogance, and independence without offensiveness. Grandeur of opinion or feeling, simply expressed, commands awe and defeats insolence.

But to address the minds of others with force, there must be originality in the communicator. What is borrowed will betray its defect of sincerity. The suspicion of a feigned character will raise instant opposition to its dictates. All writing is attractive in proportion as the idea prevails over the language: transparency of style is a primary merit.

It is a strange supposition that there is nothing new to tell. Time is always evolving new combinations of circumstances, which elicit new principles; or, at least, a new application of old ones. So large a portion of the public press is occupied by those who write only partially and with a view to mislead, that they who with ability seek only general truths, are most usefully employed.

The public differ as to those to whom they are willing to concede the credit of genius or ability. There are those who are sceptical as to the genius of Byron or Scott; but these are probably minds

either dull and perverse, or poisoned by selfish passions.

Nothing enlarges the mind like freedom from all local prejudices and narrow societies. There may be intellects which break from these limits—but rather in the speculations of the closet than in the actual thoughts and sentiments of daily life and manners. The inhabitants of every nation have some distinction of character, produced rather by climate, laws, and political institutions, than by nature. Nature is nearly the same in all. They who have moved in a petty circle are always conceited and self-sufficient. This is the case with the British as islanders: they much overrate their own institutions and manners.

Nothing went so far to polish and enlighten Europe, after a long succession of dark ages, as the crusades—because they brought the leading characters of all its different nations into frequent and familiar contact. Then again the wars with France, and the possession of part of that fine country under the Plantagenets.

But it must not be supposed that an acquaintance with the mere surface of manners gives us sound knowledge. It requires a power of just apprehension and observance to take advantage of variety of experience. Light travellers acquire nothing more than a smooth outside. Their old impressions are worn away, but no others distinctly substituted for them.

The duties of an author who can entitle himself to acquire fame by merit are difficult, laborious, and rarely bestowed. He has to embody the misty shadows of the mind into precise and defined forms: he enters into a region of vapours, and applies the sun of the mind to disperse them. I find the following lines to this purpose in an anonymous collection of poetry:—

Who from the mirror of his mind
Reflects the manners of mankind,
Observing,—commenting,—correcting
The vicious,—and the fool detecting,—
In toils not idle spends his hours,
But crowns the glass of time with flowers.
'Tis to the poet's bosom given
To tremble at the airs of heaven;
And from its quivering strings to throw
Magical notes that soften woe!
Hard as a rock, without notation,
The common brain repels creation;
No marks upon its fibres dense,
No glimmer of intelligence!
But see the gift of mental ray,
That sometimes lights this mortal clay!
Then, like the clouds in golden blaze,
That clay reflects creation's ways,
And in that form of small dimension
Embraces all the world's extension!'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

An author's life may interest without much action—His are the events of the mind—Ought to tell which of his writings are individually applicable—How far poetry may be mixed with prose in autobiography—True poetry cannot be affected—Evil mixed with all good—Morbid sensibility—Genius cannot be equable—Hypocrisy—True genius cannot be crafty—Difference between the mirror which reflects a man's person and the picture he himself draws of his own mind—He may deceive himself, but not others—Richard Cumberland—Ceremonial in writing memoirs destroys their interest—Ought not to describe the surface—Genius does not appear on the surface—Exceptions in Johnson and Burke—Not in Gray—Brilliant conversation often will not bear to be committed to paper—Evils to secluded abilities—Evils to genius from fear—Wrong to compromise opinions—All should pursue their own native bent—Rambling minds must be allowed to ramble—The author a rambler—Authorship now no distinction—But good authors rare—Authors should be original, and draw only from within.

Does any one expect that a literary man's life should be full of action; and if not, that it cannot be worth telling? He who has been much engaged in action has had but little time for thought. The workings of the mind are what we want to know from a literary man. We desire to be told how far his pursuits make him happy and virtuous—how far they soften and refine his temper,

his habits, and his heart; what have been his hopes and fears; and how he has borne the sorrows and disappointments of life. Nor is it an irrational curiosity to wish to be acquainted with the lot into which he has been cast, and the circumstances which may have contributed to the colours of his mind. We like to be informed how far the opinions and sentiments which the subjects of an author's writings have led him to express apply individually to himself; and how many of them he personally adopts and advocates. If, therefore, he intersperses any compositions of his own in his autobiography, they should be only such as answer this purpose. But surely it cannot be denied that such properly belong to what he has undertaken to treat of.

There are some who think that the intermixture of poetry with prose is a combination of bad taste. I think that they never appear so well as when they thus set off each other. Cowley set the example in his beautiful "Essays." They who consider them to interrupt the narrative are persons who desire nothing but facts; and with the feelings and judgments of such persons I will not dispute.

How far there is truth and frankness in what an author says of himself may be determined by a sagacious reader from the internal evidence. What one may dare to speak in the name of another he will not speak in his own, unless it be

true. A volume of poems will not explain these distinctions;—it will not show how much of the poetry applies to the writer himself. One great charm of the poetry of Dante and Petrarch is, that so much of it involves the history of their own feelings and lives, when those feelings were so sublime or so tender. It was the same with Milton; and again, in modern times, with Burns and Byron.

It seems to me quite impossible that true poetry can be the result of affected feelings:—and if it is not, then a poet's life must be conformable to his poetry. Many of the ideal pleasures which he represents may be raised upon imaginary circumstances; but such as actually occur to him will raise sympathetic emotions; unless indeed we can suppose that realities and the visions of the mind have no verisimilitude.

In the frailty of human nature some accompanying evil is assorted with every good. That sensitiveness, which is an inseparable ingredient of poetical genius, is often capricious and morbid. Those pretended moralists, who are severe exactors of duty from others, rise in demand in proportion to excellences already displayed. He who has exhibited noble passions and eloquent thoughts they cannot forgive, if he is ever overtaken by ill-humour and spleen. But the glow of sensibility checked is almost certain to turn to momentary petulance and disgust. And how in-

numerable are the causes of disgust which occur in daily life! The full tide of lofty emotions is sure soon to encounter obstacles; and it sometimes becomes turbid in dashing against them, like waves against a rock.

If any one of active imagination and a tremulous heart puts on the appearance of an equable temper, all my theories and all my experience induce me to believe him a hypocrite; and for hypocrisy I have no mercy. There are few vices which corrupt the internal man more than hypocrisy. I cannot bear concealment or disguise. To those who notice the reserve and coldness of my first address this may seem strange: but the thin surface of ice with me is penetrated and dissolved by the first beams of kindness or good will; and then the frankness of my nature flows in abundance.

Of some men all the talent and wit are turned to craft; but I do not think that those men can have true genius, because the feelings of genius will always have dominion over it, and will admit of no veil. There is a false sort of imagination, which is merely ornamental—which only adorns thoughts rather than originates them. This sort of genius—if it be genius—may practise disguise.

It is a natural desire to wish to hold a mirror up to the mind in which one may view oneself. But it may be said, that ugliness gazes

on itself in the glass, and in its self-delusion thinks it beauty. But some misgivings will cross it,—though Lady * * * seems to have been free from them.

But it may be remarked, that the comparison of a portrait which a man draws of his own mind with a mirror which reflects his person is deceitful. The latter must show his form as it is—the former may be drawn after his own will and whim. This is true; and if he only draws a portrait to flatter his own vanity, he will have no internal satisfaction. But he has many ties upon him to regard the truth; because he cannot be unaware, that if he can deceive himself he cannot deceive others. The public may be unwilling to believe what is true when it recommends himself:—there is a strong improbability that in such a case they will believe what is not true. The world is sharp-sighted to see the faults of others, and purblind to see their merits. Vanity always defeats itself: they to whom it is displayed are natural enemies to it, and are up in arms against it. Thus Richard Cumberland set every one against him by his vanity, his envy, and his jealousy.

There is a sort of ceremonial, which some authors have preserved in writing memoirs, apparently wishing to dress themselves out as one does to go into a formal company. Such memoirs amuse but lightly, and instruct not at all. No-

thing instructs but sincere and profound developements of the internal movements of the head and heart. To tell what lies upon the surface is insipid and useless. Men are alike in outward manners and form, and the common events of life, when inwardly they are as different as if they were of another order of beings. But who can tell these things, if one omits to tell them of himself? No one can guess what is passing in the mind of a man of genius by what he discovers in the conversation of society. Johnson and Burke were brilliant in conversation as well as powerful in their writings; but these are rare instances. I have been in company with several men of genius, who have shown no superiority of talents in their oral communications or outward appearance. Walpole remarks this of Gray. And what appears striking in conversation would often approach to nonsense if committed to paper.

I am not sure that one of positively high endowments of mental capacity is not exposed to many disadvantages by seclusion. He does not know his own superiority by comparison; and many have gone to their graves without putting forth their powers, because they did not know their strength. Diffidence, if not fatal to the blaze of genius, is a great check to it; while false confidence exposes mediocrity to ridicule.

Genius ought never to have fear:—criticism, or wit, or scoffs, or invectives, can never finally

depress or injure it. If truth is honestly sought, and generous sentiments are cultivated, they will prevail. But there must be no qualifying—no compromise of opinions—no mean submission or vacillation *ad captandum vulgus*. What is direct and sincere will probably be right, if it comes from inborn talent. It is the dilution of incompatible ingredients which weakens and vitiates the composition. They who seek to write only what is plausible, will have no long hold upon their readers.

Every one should write in his own way. Different minds work in different courses and by different processes: what may be best for one will not be so for another. A rambling intellect must not be confined within a formal path. It will thus lose all its spirit and elasticity. It is the trick of critics with seemingly friendly intention to advise an author to cultivate some power of discipline which they know is out of his nature; and then he begins to move in fetters, and finds all his strength fail him.

I am a wanderer myself, and must take my own course, or I cannot write at all. Here some sarcastic critic may cry, "Well, then, it is better that you should not write at all." But I shall write notwithstanding—scribble if he will have it so. It amuses me, and now and then gets the approval of some of my friends; though he who plies for praise, and is greedy of it, is sure to be

disappointed. There cannot be a doubt that literary composition strengthens and methodises an author's own mind. He thus elicits a thousand thoughts, which would otherwise have flitted away undefined. I speak of original composition: perhaps the mind improves little by compilation.

As to distinction, authors are so common now that little respect is paid to them. But good authors are as rare as ever—perhaps rarer. The mechanical parts of composition are now very generally possessed. The fruits of these acquirements will, however, be commonly insipid: they will look fine to the eye, and sound smoothly; but they will have little zest and no solidity. After a little while the mechanism will be discovered, and then the charm will be gone. It is astonishing how much is done by memory, and how little by the higher mental faculties. But what comes from memory is really worth nothing; it is a sort of mocking-bird, whose tones confound the true voice. There is no conviction or conscience in it; it is all hearsay. It fills uselessly a good deal of paper, and wastes a good deal of time and money.

An author ought to look inwardly, and examine his own thoughts, and sensations, and impressions, and draw from them. At first he may not trust his own opinions, or observations, or feelings; but if the native power be in him he will

gradually gain faith in himself; and what in the beginning appeared misty and chaotic, will gradually take due shape and form, and clear up like a landscape, when the vapours that enveloped it are dispelled by the morning sun.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Different effect of the scenery of nature on different minds — Aid given to others by those who feel it most—Thomson's "Seasons"—Evils of sensitiveness—Necessity of boldness and decision—Desire of fame — The author's damps in life — His mind is always busy — Glories in a spiritual essence — Does not borrow from books—His publications voluminous—The desire to communicate a part of our being — Though we cannot please all, we may please many — How additions are made to human knowledge — Effect of high ambitions —Intensity of thought — Results of practice and endurance—Is fame empty? — Has it been acquired? — Talent more glorious than birth or riches — Lofty content necessary — One must take a fixed place — Genius cannot be unconscious of its powers — Comparative excellence definable — Equivocal pretenders to fame — Happiness attainable by command of the passions—Mass of mankind must be led—Misleading lights—Few original authors—Age makes readers fastidious—Tastes will differ—Absurd to allow only one model—Ramblers eloquent—Method dull—No fixed canons in poetical criticism prevail—What is necessary to make a perfect poem—A true poet is in a state of abstraction—There is an alloy in reality—Pope's "Eloisa"—Criticism damps true poetry—True poets cannot be hard and unimpressible — Byron recovered from cruel criticism — Criticism rightly directed against charlatans — Byron's boldness brought criticism to wait on him — Common readers take their tastes from the critical journals—Native course of poetry rarely pursued—Prose fictions do not deal in poetical characters—An author of genius should write fearlessly—Cavils against high fiction—Answer to them—Difficult for high poets to keep on the wing long enough—A favourite opinion, that mental superiority results solely from culture — On the contrary, it is almost solely inborn power — Art injures it—Caprice of public opinion—A poetical fragment.

Does not the scenery of nature make a more distinct, a more delightful, and a more noble impres-

sion on one man than another? Does he feel it more, and can he describe it in language better? Does it call up in his mind ideal associations? These are among the positive qualifications of a poet. Can they be acquired by art and labour? No. Is it then his duty not to let these powers sleep? I think that it is. He who assists others to admire nature, performs a work of moral merit. This admiration softens, enlarges, and elevates the heart. No one can read Thomson's "Seasons" with pleasure, and not be the better for it.

But he who comes into the world with extreme sensitiveness meets with every sort of discouragement. The jealousy of superiority prompts others to depress him, and calumniate him; they do all they can to pluck from him the belief that he is born for great things,—knowing that he who has no confidence in himself will do nothing well. They too often succeed. For one genius that is brought by sunshine into bloom ten are blighted. Nothing is more true than the *possunt quia posse videntur*. Without boldness and decision of thought genius will never display itself. But many seem to think that this boldness and decision are of the essence of genius; and that where they are not, genius is wanting. It surely is not so: extreme diffidence is often the accompaniment of high genius.

The unfavourable opinion entertained by others

cannot destroy inborn faculties; but it may veil them, so that the possessor himself may not know his own endowments—

At quid scire valet, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter?

The cold-minded censor may cry that it will be all the same in the grave; but can it be the same whether one has done good, or passed this life as an useless cipher? Powers that smoulder within always breed disease.

No one has met with more of these dampers through life than I have. From my very childhood every sort of chill was thrown in my way. And to aggravate it, the expression of this opinion has been called querulousness. Providence allows these diversities of lot and treatment for its own inscrutable purposes. There are others who have been met by cheers, and handed forward and lifted up by friendship and benevolence; but I have been left to struggle through life against the tide. The comment has been that I failed, because I ought to have failed; that is, for want of powers. This I am unwilling to admit; because if I do admit it, I shall create the deficiency, if it did not exist before: as I have said that self-confidence is necessary, so want of faith in self would palsy my pen.

I am never in a state of dull stupor, unless it be from the effect of some temporary derangement of

the body, whence the vapours of disease cloud the mind. My ideas are always in movement, and the fibres of my heart never lie still. My reflections, if not deep and just, are at least abundant; and through the day I have visions, as I have dreams through the night. Reality is not sufficient for me, and I glory in a spiritual creation. I ponder upon many things, and endeavour to extract the truth from them all. I may agree with a thousand books; but I borrow from none. My opinions are my own; they result from conviction, —at least of the moment. In what I fail there will be many keen enough to find out. If there be any thing which I do well, censure will not finally cover or debase it.

I have been deterred and slackened a thousand times, but at last I have gone on; and I have added to the heap of my literary works, till in quantity at least they are considerable. Whatever merit they may have, if any, it is not for me to point out. I know that they have been written with pure intentions, and from a passionate and undebased love of letters. Mere material pleasures are fugitive and unsatisfactory; mine have always been mental. But of what use to others is that which passes in the mind, unless it be embodied in language? The desire to communicate is implanted in our social being. If we are conscious of generous thoughts, our nature impels us to recommend ourselves by imparting them to others.

But what are generous thoughts? That which commands the sympathy of some will make no impression upon others: we cannot please all, but we may please many; and there are certain intrinsic marks of excellence which cannot be mistaken. Mastery consists in distinctness, force, and originality. What is trite and faint betrays itself at once. He who writes from himself will probably hit on something new; an identity of combination of circumstances, ideal associations and feelings can scarcely occur to two individuals. He who sets things in a light in which they have not been set before, adds to human knowledge.

Men by high ambitions, zealously and virtuously pursued, may elevate themselves to a point of infinite sublimity. Intensity of thought operating on intensity of feeling may elicit surprising illumination. What may be woven out of that small conformation, the human brain, is as wonderful in expansion as in richness. But some, who have the faculties, will not undergo the toil and the exhaustion. Those faculties will not come into play at once; there must be practice and endurance, and the calm confidence of unintermitted endeavour. There must be a bosom grown gradually firm against blights and winter frosts, and the pelting of storms.

I have gone through a long life with a fervour and passion for intellectual truth sometimes

damped—never for a moment extinguished. I have entered deep into the misty region of shadowy ideas; and I have endeavoured, with a clear and undaunted eye, to pierce through the veil of spiritual essences. My mental travels have been varied and distant; and I have passed a perilous, and often gloomy and despondent journey. I am often astonished when I look back on all the difficulties and hair-breadth escapes I have had to encounter.

What has been the reward of these toils and dangers? An empty name! Is that much? But have I acquired it? I suspect not. How many would laugh me to scorn if I should so delude myself! Why are we so uneasy if we cannot persuade ourselves that we are of some consequence in the world? Some pride themselves on birth, some on riches, and some on talent. Who can doubt which is the most glorious? But then if the pretension is denied by others as the mere arrogance of vanity, does it not cause more pain than satisfaction? Envy and jealousy are dominant in the world, and what pretension do envy and jealousy admit?

If there be not a lofty content of mind, there is no situation or endowment free from feverish desires and crossed hopes. One should think well, and compare coolly and carefully, before he fixes his place in any scale; and then not lightly

be driven from it. If we are once steadily fixed, however low, innumerable mortifications are saved. This is amongst the advantages of a defined rank in society.

I doubt if an instance can be produced of a genius totally unconscious of its powers, and free from all aspirings after fame. If such can be found, it can reconcile itself to obscurity and neglect. Beattie says,—

> Know thine own worth, and reverence the lyre!

None are so troublesome to themselves and others, as those who want self-confidence and self-complacence. They are always taking affronts, and always in a state of feverish irritation.

If we could believe that there was no such thing as comparative excellence accurately definable, and that all depended on accident or caprice of opinion, then, if fame be our object, we must always be kept in suspense and doubt, and must be perpetually driven to management and contrivance. There are, indeed, equivocal authors who, scarcely rising above mediocrity, may be favoured for a time by adventitious circumstances. I am persuaded that such persons had better let authorship alone.

Human life might be happiness, if we could command our passions and think rightly; but erroneous views of things lead to all painful feelings and false designs. It is not in the power

of the mass of mankind to discover the right path, but it is in their power to follow it by the lights offered to them.

But there are more misleading lights than true ones,—will-o'-the-wisps put forth to draw into pits and snares. Here lies one of the difficulties of a want of original judgment and taste. We might safely rest on others, if all gave good advice. The sophistries of literature are infinite, and incapable of unravelment; and he who reads without selection or examination, will read till he has no fixed ideas: the impression of one book will supersede that of the preceding one, as wave swallows up wave.

The strictly original authors are incredibly few. Most books are, more or less, the result of memory or compilation; while the original thoughts, that are intermixed, are faint and imperfect. In youth and middle age we can read almost any thing: as we grow old we grow very fastidious. Nothing secondary can any longer interest us: we demand what rises like the freshness of the morning breath from the pure earth.

Tastes will and ought to differ; it must be a stupid prejudice which would make every thing conform to one model: therefore it is disgusting to demand one sole kind of excellence. If there be superiority of merit in its own line, and that line a high one, what more can be asked? Take

a rambling mind; there is the best chance of eloquence: method is commonly dull, &c.

After the innumerable modern criticisms on poetry, there is nothing which exhibits fixed and consistent canons or principles. In almost all of them secondary or technical merits are put forth as tests of superiority. The original maintain the spirit; the visionary enthusiasm is little looked to. All the charm is supposed to lie in the ornament of the language, not in the invented idea or image which it is intended to represent. To make a perfect poem there must be an imaginary story in which all the characters, all the scenery, and all the combination of incidents, are the creation of the poet's brain; and these must have probability according to the laws of nature; and also be sublime, or pathetic, or beautiful. They must be told with the brilliance and believed presence of a dream. This is the ideal excellence of poetry, which, in fact, is scarcely ever reached except by a very few of the greatest poets, such as Dante, Petrarch, Shakspeare, Spenser, Milton, and Byron. But all poetry ought to be examined with a view to some approach to it.

A true poet is almost always in a state of ideal abstraction from actual objects. Why Providence should endow those whom it favours with minds capable to create something more beautiful than reality, we do not know;—we only know that so

it is. There is always an alloy in reality. Poets of mere observance are but minor bards. Thus Pope, except in "Eloisa," never rises to the higher ranks of poetry. To talk of poets as inspired seems, to cold censors, nonsense: but they are inspired.

It is the tendency of criticism to damage all genuine out-burstings of the muse. It is a natural and unequal flow, which will not bear mechanical measure and rule, nor keep within a regular channel; and it is so delicate, that touch it, and its spirit evaporates. It is vain to argue that this ought not to be so, and that it is all whim and humour; you may as well expect the string of a harp to be as tough and hard as a cable-rope. If it is not tremulous it will echo back no notes to the breeze.

If ever any great poet was hard, bold, defying, unimpressible, let this phenomenon be brought forth to contradict our theories. I have never read of such an one in all the biography of mankind. It is the grievance of poets that they are unconquerably morbid. Where there is a great flow, there will be a great ebb. In the imperfection of our nature, our raptures are transient, and brief in proportion as they are strong. They

> Who tread the even tenor of their way,

if more exempt from pain, must be content with less enjoyment.

I cannot doubt that better poetry would be written if all the books of criticism in the world were burnt. Criticism never yet made a poet: it has destroyed thousands. It may be asked why, when the flame of inspiration seizes the poet, he should think about criticism and critics? Can he then so far forget all but himself, as to be insensible to the scornful cries of cavil or objection? Byron recovered from them, and was roused to higher efforts; but it was a singular magnanimity in him, of which, perhaps, there is no other instance.

Where charlatans come forth with their factitious floweriness or marvels, and catch the public attention by false stimulants, there well-directed criticism may perhaps be useful. But this seldom happens; the critics commonly follow popular caprice. They who first attacked Byron praised him to the skies when the cry was with him:

> — their little bark attendant sails,
> Pursues the triumph, and partakes the gales!

I have never met with a common reader who ventured to admire any thing which the critical journals did not authorize them to admire. Luckily those journals often contradict each other point-blank; but censure generally pleases them more than applause.

There may be those who will think that I ascribe more effects to these criticisms than be-

longs to them, and that native genius will follow its own course in spite of them. This at least is certain, that the native course of poetry rarely has been pursued. The epic or narrative is its native course,—the narrative of imagined persons, events, descriptions, and feelings. This is not only the most attractive, but the most easy for a true poetical mind to execute. I grieve that I have thrown away a long life without indulging in this path. The field of invention is here inexhaustible; and one thus sees an embodied creation gradually accumulate before one's eyes.

Perhaps it will be observed, is not this done in those prose fictions which bear the name of novels? I answer that these deal in artificial characters and their accompaniments, of which scarcely any are poetical; and the web of most of them is fantastic and improbable. Of modern novels, those which had most the tone of poetry were Charlotte Smith's, except some of Sir Walter Scott's, such as the "Pirate."

An author, having the powers of poetical invention, ought to be conscious of them and write fearlessly. The native dictates of a lofty and tender heart can never fail to interest; nor will the images, or their combinations, be without charms. Crabbe is inventive; but most of the characters he draws are the reverse of poetical. There is nothing poetical in the description of a poor-house and its inhabitants.

And what good is to arise from these fictions which represent humanity in a light exalted beyond the truth? It is thus that cold cavillers talk; but they are not beyond selected instances,—at least of ideal truth. If they are, they want one necessary ingredient of good poetry — verisimilitude. I do not think it a light benefit to mankind,

> To wake the soul by tender strokes of art,
> To raise the fancy, and to melt the heart—

Such is the effect of an eloquent and noble fiction of poetry. It requires the force of a visionary mind in its most excited and highest temperament. But such a mind nursing its best energies, and proceeding with undaunted hope, may perform the charms of magic. This world, coarse as it is to those who are coarsely endowed, is such as the mind makes it. The scenery of nature is more beautiful than even poets have painted it; and imagination often presents to us, with all the force of reality, a heavenly sublimity and purity. Why are these to pass away like a castle in the clouds, which changes its shape and is gone at the instant we are gazing at it?

There are numerous minds which dream these things: but when they attempt, waking, to bring them out and embody them, they fail. These like to gaze upon the mirrors which reflect the realized inventions of more forceful and enduring

imaginations. The difficulty of the true poet is to keep upon the wing long enough, because the fire, through which he moves, melts his pinions. He is therefore too apt to be exhausted before he can have finished his course and reached his end. When he has fallen to the ground it is almost a hopeless effort to raise himself again into the same track. Whatever, therefore, is most intense and most lofty, has a great chance of being left unfinished.

There exists among mankind, even among persons of good common sense, a great desire to impress the opinion, that superiority of mind depends principally on cultivation, method, and labour: but it is almost solely the result of inborn power and endowment. Genius is all; art and toil are nothing. In one is life; in the other is a dull attempt at inanimate and factitious representation. But the moment genius resorts to art it loses its pre-eminence, and becomes secondary even in the class to which it debases itself: it clips its own wings of all their strength, and does not know how to use the false ones which it puts on.

The caprice of public taste is proverbial: no excellence can secure its applause; and without it, what avails it to write? A publisher will not, and cannot pay attention to what the world disregards. Here often is the bane and the grave of genius,—

> We speak to those who will not, cannot, hear.

LINES

WRITTEN JANUARY 8TH, 1833.

"Wherefore, in midst of misery and wrong
Indulge in fictions, and break out in song?"
So the cold cynic cries. What! dwell in woe,
And, where we cannot change, augment the blow?
My spirit would escape thy mortal hate,
And smile upon the dire decrees of Fate!
Do man's mischances spring from faults his own?
Only by self the seeds of sorrow sown?
Craft, fraud, extortion, robbery, and lies,
Too oft in worldly warfare win the prize.
What boots it if the visions of my brain
No sympathy from other minds can gain?
To peace they call me, or to joy awake,
And of another being I partake.
Of my own intellect I am the lord,
Nor force its labours for a vile reward.
Too careless for the buckram artist's taste,
My strains on feeble ears I vainly waste.
Mine only from th' internal fountain flow,
Nor other but their own emotions know.
What is reality but earthly matter
Disease will perish and the winds will scatter!

* * * *

CHAPTER XXX.

Death of Lord Tenterden—Place of his birth—Where educated—Author's early acquaintance and friendship with him—Character of his talents—His removal to Oxford—He gains the Oxford prizes—Cause of his embracing the profession of the law—Pupil to a special pleader—Called to the Bar—His marriage—His treatise on the "Law of Merchant-Ships," &c.—His progress at the Bar—Weakness of his eyes, and his momentary resolution to retire—Promoted to be a judge of the Common Pleas—Thence removed to the King's Bench—His elevation to succeed Lord Ellenborough as chief justice—His acknowledged pre-eminence as chief justice—Offered a peerage by Canning, which he accepts — Canning's handsome letter — Author's continued correspondence with him after coming abroad — Eloge on his professional character—His freedom from intrigue, and his advancement solely owing to his merit—Attempt to discriminate his intellectual character — His private habits; moral and religious character — Author's uninterrupted friendship with him — Extracts from his last letters — Specimens of his Latin poetry.

On the 4th of November, 1832, I lost the dearest, longest, and most intimate friend I ever had. This was one who rose to fill one of the highest offices of the country with the greatest skill, integrity, and honour. Charles Abbott, Lord Tenterden, Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench for fourteen years, was born at Canterbury, in October, 1762; so that at his death he had just completed his seventieth year. He was born within the precincts of the cathedral,

close to its great western portal; and was educated on the foundation of the king's school of that cathedral, founded by Henry VIII., under Dr. Osmund Beauvoir. From his earliest years he was industrious, apprehensive, regular, and correct in all his conduct, even in his temper, and prudent in every thing; and early gave presages of future distinction.

I became acquainted with him in July, 1775, when I was removed from Maidstone to Canterbury school. I was about six or seven weeks his junior in age, and was placed in the same class with him; in which, after a short struggle, I won the next place to him, and kept it till I quitted school for Cambridge, in autumn, 1780, in my eighteenth year. Though we were in some degree competitors, our friendship was never broken or cooled. He always exceeded me in accuracy, steadiness, and equality of labour; while I was more fitful, flighty, and enthusiastic. He knew the rules of grammar better, and was more sure in any examination or task. He wrote Latin verses and prose themes with more correctness; while I was more ambitious and more unequal, and preferred translating Horace into English verse, to writing moral essays, whether in Latin or in English. There was the same difference in our tempers and our tastes. He was always prudent and calm; I was always passionate and restless. Each knew well wherein the other's strength lay, and yielded to it.

In the beginning of 1781 he was elected scholar on the foundation of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and came under the tuition of the Rev. Thomas Burgess, now Bishop of Salisbury, then an eminent Greek scholar, who had published a new edition (I think) of Dawes's "Miscellanea Critica," and Burton's "Pentalogia." Abbott immediately distinguished himself at Oxford, and became a candidate for the University Prize of Latin verses; which, on a second attempt, he won. Lisle Bowles, if I recollect, succeeded the year before him. He afterwards gained the Bachelor's Prize for the prose essay: his subject was—"The Use and Abuse of Satire." At that time these were the only two prizes to be obtained at Oxford. The University now confers honours for classical and mathematical attainments, and the prizes for composition are now four instead of two.

About this period he became tutor to Judge Buller's son, which led to the future destiny of his life. That learned and sagacious Judge immediately appreciated his solid and strong talents, and recommended him to embrace the profession of the law, rather than of the church, for which he had hitherto designed himself. It was about the year 1788, when he was in his twenty-sixth year, that he embraced this study; and he submitted, by the advice of Judge Buller, to the drudgery of attending for some months

the office of the great London solicitors, Messrs. Sandys and Co., of Craig's Court. He then became a regular pupil to a special pleader, Mr. Wood, afterwards a Baron of the Exchequer.

In due time he practised as a special pleader for himself, and acquired considerable business; and, among the rest, much Crown business. By this course his progress became sure, though not immediately brilliant. After seven years he considered that the time had arrived when he might safely be called to the Bar; and accordingly, in 1795, in his thirty-third year, he was so called, and went the Oxford Circuit. About this time also he married Miss Lamotte, eldest daughter of John Lagier Lamotte, Esq., then of Basildon in Berkshire, afterwards of Thorn Grove in Worcestershire. His practice continued steadily to increase, and his reputation became established for correctness of learning, and soundness of opinion. He also published a treatise of the "Law relative to Merchant Ships and Seamen," which has been ever since held in the highest estimation. It is not a crude collection of cases ill put together, like most law books, but accurately digested and elegantly composed.

For twenty years he worked at the Bar with steady and progressive profit and fame, but with no sudden bursts and momentary blaze, till his health and his spirits began to give way. I well remember, in the year 1815, his lamenting to me

in a desponding tone that his eyesight was impaired, and that he had some thoughts of retiring altogether from the profession. I dissuaded him, and entreated him not to throw away all the advantages he had gained by a life of painful toil, at the very period when he might hope for *otium cum dignitate*. I left him with regret, and under the impression that his health and spirits were declining. It was a most critical epoch of his life. In the year 1808 a seat on the bench had been offered to him at the time Mr. Justice Lawrence removed from the King's Bench to the Court of Common Pleas. He declined the offer, his income from the profession at that time exceeding the salary of a Judge. That income increased with each succeeding year. His strength in 1816 being no longer equal to the harassing toils of practice, he in the month of February in that year accepted a judicial situation, and first took his seat on the bench as a Puisne Judge in the Court of Common Pleas. Lord Eldon, who had always been his steady friend, was at that time Chancellor. In May of the same year, a vacancy occurring in the King's Bench on the death of Mr. Justice Le Blanc, it was proposed to Mr. Justice Abbott to remove from the Common Pleas to the King's Bench. He was very averse to leave the comparative ease of the one Court for the toil of the other. Lord Ellenborough anxiously urged the removal, and the appointment took place.

In two years the health of Lord Ellenborough declined; and on the death of that distinguished nobleman, my friend became, on November 4th, 1818, Lord Chief Justice of England, but without a peerage. Here was an extraordinary succession of events in three short years.

With what admirable skill, honour, and steadiness he fulfilled the most laborious, most difficult and overwhelming duties of his high station, is universally acknowledged. Though he was supposed to hold Tory politics, which indisposed the popular journals to him, yet all those journals admitted that no chief, since the time of Lord Holt, had discharged his exalted duties with equal skill, learning, talent, integrity, and impartiality. This is the very highest praise which could be conferred; because, taking in all qualities, Lord Holt's name is undoubtedly the first in the legal annals of England.

In 1827, when his Majesty's Ministers thought proper to elevate to the peerage two other eminent members of the law, Lord Lyndhurst and Lord Plunkett,—Mr. Canning, the Premier, in a few beautiful words of high acknowledgement of the merits of the Chief Justice, also offered in his Majesty's name the peerage to him, as due to the exalted station he filled, and the exemplary, able, and honorable manner in which he had discharged its duties; and he was accordingly raised to the title of Lord Tenterden, the name of a town in his

native county Kent, to which from early associations he was particularly attached.

The following year I came abroad again, and he had the goodness, among all his labours, to keep up his correspondence with me by long letters. His last letter to me was written so short a time before his death, that my answer, by return of post, could only have arrived in London on the day he died; and, of course, never came to his hands.

I believe that no lawyer ever made his way to the highest offices by pure force of talents, learning, and integrity, and without the smallest intrigue, like Lord Tenterden. Parliamentary jobbing, connexions, solicitation, servility, have raised a great many. He was completely free from all of them. He never asked a favor in his life. He is a singular instance of a lawyer attaining the high office of Chief Justice of England without having previously filled the situation of Attorney or Solicitor General, or having at any period of his life been a member of the House of Commons. He did his work honestly, sedulously, and ably; and trusted to that, and that alone. It was the same in his decisions; he abided by the law, and the law alone. No man ever discharged every duty of life with more conscientiousness and correctness.

In the House of Lords he attended principally, and almost solely, to what he considered great

constitutional, rather than political questions, and to such legal alterations as were from time to time introduced. He himself brought forward several measures effecting real and practical amendments in the law of the land. When the various changes in the law and the administration of justice, made during the last few years, are maturely and dispassionately considered at some future period, the measures introduced by Lord Tenterden may perhaps be deemed more solid and beneficial than some of the more extensive alterations effected by bolder, but less cautious, legislators.

In 1830, the two months following the summer circuit, almost the only period of relaxation throughout the year, were devoted by this distinguished man to the preparation of measures of this kind, as appears by a letter which I received from him in the September of that year. "You are probably aware," he writes, "that we had three commissions: one on the practice and proceedings of the superior courts of common law; another, on the law of real property; and a third, on the ecclesiastical courts. Two reports have been made by each of the two first; none by the latter, of which I am a member. The reports contain recommendations and proposals for many alterations, some of which I think useful and practicable. Something, however, must be done by the legislature to satisfy the public mind; and, under this impression, I have employed myself

since the circuit in preparing no fewer than five bills, intended chiefly to give some further powers to the common law courts, and make some alterations on the practice; but, without infringing on any important principle, adopting some of the recommendations, with some alterations from the proposals.

"I wish it were possible to cure the evil you so justly complain of. Whatever shortens and simplifies will be calculated to save expense; but acts of parliament cannot make men honest. I doubt whether an act to subject bills for conveyancing to taxation, as I think they ought to be, would effect much. I would willingly promote such an act; but if I bring my five bills before parliament, I shall have done at least as much as I ought to do, and perhaps more; though, to say the truth, I have one more bill on the anvil, and have had for at least three years, without courage to propose it; and it has had much of the *limæ labor*. Indeed, to say the truth, the *limæ labor* is an occupation by no means disagreeable to my mind."

It has been said that he was not a brilliant man. I scarcely know how it can be denied that one, in whom concentered so many great qualities, was brilliant. It is true that in his speeches and decisions he did not introduce imagery or ornament; and it may be admitted that imagination was not the predominant power of his intellect: but I do not think that he wanted

imagination when called for: he not only wrote good Latin poetry, but elegant English poetry occasionally, in which neither imagery nor sentiment is wanting. Ought we not to attribute the closeness of his mind to his conscientious resolve to chain himself to the grave duties of his profession? Oratory is out of place in discussing a question of legal authority. If he had given up part of his mind to politics, he might have made more noise in the world; but could he have so ably and so honestly discharged the burden of that exalted office, on which the lives, liberties, and properties of the people are dependent? I remember three Chief Justices before him; Mansfield, Kenyon, and Ellenborough: two of them were politicians: compare the decisions of all three with those of Lord Tenterden. Kenyon wanted education, dignity, and temper: he knew nothing out of his profession; and yet he had the vanity to display himself on topics on which he only showed his own crudeness and bigotry. Mansfield was plausible, elegant, and eloquent; but it may fairly be doubted whether he was sound. Lord Ellenborough was learned, powerful, and vigorous; but did not possess the temper and discretion of his successor.

Of few other men can it be said, that in many points of view they were so pre-eminent, and so good in all. Of this man I retained the esteem and warm friendship from the age of twelve years

to the last; not in words alone, but in deeds. No one will deny that he was a good judge of the human character; indeed it may be owned that the tendency of his mind and disposition went a little to the verge of severity; and that he was direct, penetrating, and caustic. He was impatient of any thing circuitous, evasive, and which attempted disguise; and at once saw and detected vanity in all its lurking holes. He was a close reasoner, and would allow of no sophistries; but perhaps he had a greater capacity for judging, than for finding arguments. In every thing he was distinguished for good sense; but he had not the wit to set the table in a roar. His mind was occupied with great things; and they who do great things well, seldom do little things gracefully.

He had been reared under the shadow of the Church: he had looked from his earliest infancy on the mighty structure of its magnificent metropolitan cathedral: he had been taught as a child to venerate its ancient and noble institutions: thence he had imbibed his learning. He was throughout life a Christian, sincere and practical.

His private amusements were few; and he had little leisure for them. Latterly he took up botany, and wrote some elegant Latin poems on flowers and plants, to recreate his mind from its severe occupations.

He read poetry, especially the classics, with great feeling and taste; but for the wildness of the modern school of poetry, which grew up in his

time, he had neither sympathy nor patience. I differed from him on these points; and neither of us, of course, convinced the other. Of all my early poems he was the critic; and persuaded me to more corrections than I was willing to make.

In my poem "On Modern Aristocracy," I introduced the following address to him:—

> O thou, from whose firm course thy steadier heart
> No wild'ring fires could dazzle to depart;
> By force concentred—reason, memory, toil,
> Who keep'st one pace, nor art nor hate could foil!
> O thou, with whom one task in boyish days,
> One friendly rivalry, one aim of praise,
> One sport, one taste, of summer and of shade,
> One growing theme by winter's fires essay'd—
> By better hopes and fairer prospects crown'd,
> How wide the lot thy happier age has found!
> Placed at ambition's summit—on the seat
> Where Justice, Mercy, Wisdom, Honour, meet;
> The toil by day, the nightly sleep that draws
> A nation's loud concurrence of applause;
> A conscience pure and high, that proudly knows
> From no base arts the lofty guerdon flows!
> The thought that if the toil intense is pain,
> For public good thou labour'st not in vain;
> The assurance, when this scene is closed by fate,
> Honours thy long posterity shall wait;—
> O, what a bright career of just renown
> That pays thy virtues with an earthly crown!

These memorials have not hitherto contained many letters—and this for several reasons; among the rest, that the greater part of my literary correspondence was left in England. I have a large bundle of Lord Tenterden's correspondence from the first year of our separating for Cambridge and Oxford.

It cannot be expected that Lord Tenterden, in his latter days, in his discharge of the most laborious of all high offices, had time for the continuation of a private correspondence even with his most intimate friends. I hope his noble son will forgive me, if in very pride at the continuance to the last of the friendship of his truly excellent and wise parent, I record his kindness for me by the following short extracts from his last letters.

Lord Tenterden's sound mind, great discernment, and great experience, are testimonies in my favour, of which it would be culpable stupidity in me to forego the advantage.

At the time the letters, from which the following are extracts, were written, my valued and honoured friend was labouring under severe illness—illness which, alas! deprived the country of the services of this great and good man:—

"Russell Square, May 20, 1832.

"MY DEAR SIR EGERTON,

"I have made several attempts to write to you, but have found myself unable to do so: nor can I now write as I ought and wish to do. My spirit is so depressed, that when I am not strongly excited by some present object that admits of no delay, I sink into something very nearly approaching to torpidity. My affection for you remains unchanged. God bless you!

"Your most affectionate friend,

"TENTERDEN."

"Russell Square, June 8, 1832.

"MY DEAR SIR EGERTON,

"I have found your letter here at my return this evening. The corner of the letter has by some accident been burnt; and this accident has unfortunately destroyed the only part that, as a matter of business, was at all material.

"I was not aware of the clause in the 'Code Napoleon,' to which you allude. Can you refer me to it? I have the 'Cinque Codes,' in which I believe the 'Code Napoleon' is adopted as to most matters of civil legislation. That Code, however, is, as to commercial purposes, in which I formerly was much conversant, very little more than a transcript of some of the ordinances of Louis XIV. The practice mentioned is certainly unknown in England. I doubt its expedience as a measure to save expense;—that is a point that experience can alone settle. With us, I am satisfied it would not answer, and am sure it would never be adopted without the sanction and efforts of the ministry; or, in future times, of those who, through a nominal ministry and a nominal King, will be the real governors of the State. A bill for settling disputes by arbitration, under the authority of a Judge, introduced into the House of Lords on the recommendation of the commissioners, relating to the courts of common law, has

now been for some months before the House of Commons, being sent from the House of Lords. It was sent twice before, and died there a natural death by prorogation or dissolution, and, from all I hear, is likely to die in the same way this third time. I thought I had now removed all objections by confining the power of the Judge and Court not merely to cross demands of more than two items on each side as before, but to the cases wherein one of the parties desired such reference. But it seems this will not satisfy some persons; and I am told that it cannot be brought before a committee till after midnight; and whenever it has been so brought on, an opponent desires the House to be counted, and the requisite number of members are never found to be present.*

"Another bill introduced by me, on the same recommendation, being uniformity of process in the several courts of law at Westminster, found no opponent in the Commons, and passed very glibly through its several stages, and has received the Royal Assent. I have two more bills, now in the Lords, which passed, and went to the Commons last sessions as one bill, and there died a natural death.† The same thing will probably happen this sessions; and should it be so, I must

* I myself experienced this several times in the Commons in my attempts to amend the Poor Laws.—S. E. B.

† I also experienced this in the Lords on a bill regarding a settlement by cow-pasturage, after it had passed the Commons.—S. E. B.

think I have received a sufficient admonition to interfere no farther in such matters.

"We differ upon the great measure that has so long agitated the country. I considered the Catholic Bill as the first, and this as the second step to overturn all the institutions of the country. In my anticipations of the effect of the first I have certainly not been mistaken. The present state of Ireland proves this. Would to God I may be mistaken of the effect of the Reform Bill!* Great alarm was felt yesterday from the accounts of a proceeding at Paris, as published in 'The Times.' I learn to-day that this has subsided, and that the government prevailed in the conflict. I have no confidence in a temporary triumph over a principle that I believe was never subdued, and can only be restrained by unintermitting coercion.

"I am, my dear Sir Egerton,

"Yours most affectionately,

"TENTERDEN."

"Russell Square, October 19, 1832.

"MY DEAR SIR EGERTON,

"I came to town yesterday to attend his Majesty on the Recorder's report, and have received your letter this morning.

* My noble friend's predictions have proved too true. This was written only sixteen days before Lord Tenterden's death.—S. E. B.

"I have lately suffered, and am still suffering very much, from an internal complaint, which they call an irritation of the mucous membrane. It troubled me during all the circuit. I got rid of it for a short time at Leamington, but it soon returned with greater violence, and has for some time deprived me of appetite, and produced great depression of spirits. Sir Henry Halford however assures me that a medicine he has ordered me will in time remove the complaint, and my confidence in him induces me to trust it may be so, though after a trial of six days I cannot say that I find any sensible improvement. God bless you!

"Your most affectionate friend,

"TENTERDEN."

"Sir S. E. Brydges, Bart.

In closing this volume with the following specimens of Lord Tenterden's later Latin poetry, I deem it best to give, as explanatory, his own words. They are of the date 15th of September, 1830, and as follow:—

"I have always felt that it might be said that a Chief Justice and a Peer might employ his leisure hours better than in writing nonsense-verses about flowers. But I must tell you how this fancy of recommencing to hammer Latin metres, after a cessation of more than thirty years, began. Brougham procured for me, from Lord Grenville, a copy of some poems printed by him under the

title of 'Nugæ,' chiefly his own; one or two, I believe, of Lord Wellesley, written long ago; and a piece of very good Greek humour by Lord Holland. The motto in the title-page is four or five hendecasyllabic lines by Fabricius. At the same time, John Williams, of the Northern Circuit, now the Queen's solicitor-general, who is an admirable scholar, sent me four or five Greek epigrams of his own. I had a mind to thank each of them, and found I could do so with great ease to myself in ten hendecasyllables. This led me to compose two trifles in the same metre on two favourite flowers; and afterwards some others (now I think twelve in all) in different Horatian metres; and one an Ovidian epistle, of which the subject is the 'Forget Me Not.' One of the earliest is an 'Ode on the Conservatory,' in the Alcaic metre, of which the last stanza contains the true cause and excuse of the whole, and this I will now transcribe:

Sit fabulosis fas mihi cantibus
Lenire curas! sit mihi floribus
Mulcere me fessum, senemque
Carpere quos juvenis solebam.

You see I am now on my hobby, and you must be patient while I take a short ride.

"Another of the earliest is an ode in the Sapphic metre on the 'Convallaria Maialis,' The Lily of the Valley. * * * *

"I am a great admirer of Linnæus, and my verses contain many allusions to his system; not however, I trust, quite so luscious as Darwin's 'Loves of the Plants,' which I believe were soon forgotten. I have not seen the book for many years.

"I have one little ode, written in the present year, on a plant called the 'Linnæa Borealis,' which Sir J. Smith tells us was a name given to it from its supposed resemblance to the obscurity of the early days of the great botanist. It is not common, and possesses no particular attraction. Smith says it has sometimes been found on the Scottish mountains; and I have a plant sent to me last spring by Dr. Williams. I will send you a copy of this also. You must give me credit for the botanical correctness of the first part—of the rest you can judge, and you may criticize as much as you please.

"There are three other metres of Horace on which I should like to write something; but what, or when, I know not. It is now high time to quit this subject."

CONVALLARIA MAIALIS.

Quo pedes olim valuere, robur,
Lætus et mentis juvenilis ardor,
S tuo, dulcis, redeunte curru,
Maia, redirent,

Quærerem inculti nemorosa ruris,
Impiger densas penetrare valles,
Quâ suos gratâ renovant sub umbrâ
Lilia flores.

Ducat haud fallax odor insolentem;
Et loquax flatû levis aura grato
Abditam frustra sobolem recessu
Prodet avito.

Conditus molli foliorum amictû
Dum tener ventos timet atque solem,
Fortior tandem gracili racemos
Stipite surgit,

Flosculis nutans oneratus albis:
Non ebur lucet, Pariumve marmor
Purius, nec qua decorat pruina
Cana cupressos.

Talis et pectus niveumque collum,
Advenâ viso, pudibunda texit
Insulæ Virgo, leviterque cymbam à
Littore trusit,

Voce sed leni facieque mota,
Hospitem, fido prius indicatum
Somniis vati, magicas ad ædes
Nescia duxit;

Quæ diu, patris comes exsulantis,
Vallium saltus coluit quietos,
Læta si nigros roseo ligaret
Flore capillos;

Mox tamen tristi monitu parentis
Territa, absentique timens, puella,
Nobilis supplex, petere ipsa regem
Ausit et urbem.

Otii lassum accipitrem canemque,
Seque captivum juvenem querentis,
Et lacus dulces, Elinamque molli
Voce sonantis,

Palluit cantus: adiit trementem
Lene subridens generosus hospes,
Simplici plumâ, viridique veste
Notus, et ore.

Et suâ, quem tu petis, hic in arce
Regius, jam nunc ait, est Jacobus,
Virgini numquam gravis invocanti;
Mitte timores,

Te manent intus pater, atque patre
Carior; nudis Procerum capillis
Cœtus expectat, poterisque opertum
Noscere regem.

Et vagi posthâc equitis pericla
Forsan, et suavis Elenæ loquelas,
Et levem vates memori phaselum
Carmine dicet.

Cal. Maii, 1828.

LINNÆA BOREALIS.

Parvula, sed magni jam nominis, infrequens sub umbrâ
Humi recumbit herba nigricanti,
Arida piniferi montis loca, glareamque raram
Inter, remotis in jugis quiescens,

Attamen haud Floram Divam latet: illa flosculorum
Decus gemellum frondibus minutis
Addit, neglectamque viris fovet; æqua duriori
Mitique nutrix in solo virentûm.

Talis et Arctoo sub sidere, frigidoque cœlo
Ignotus, indigens, diu jacebat
Paupere Linnæus tectus Lare; destinatus olim,
Princeps scientiæ novæ Magister,

Herbarum species dignoscere, nuptiasque justas,
Gentesque, et ordines docere certos.
Quippe ut non Veneris sine numine possit exoriri
Frutex, vel herba, vel nemus, probavit,

Aut filices, abdunt quæ semina, quæve tristis Austri
Deserta taxus increpat morantes,
Orbam se sterilemque dolens, nisi conjugis remoti
Genialis aura visat invocantem.

Præscia Flora illum sibi nutriit, et, juvante lunâ,
Vernis odoribus cubile tinxit,
Infantisque oculis ultro Dea somnientis altâ
Sub nocte se palam dedit videri,

Atque comes hilaris Venus adfuit; ora tum manusqu
Junctas, amantes ut decet pudicas,
Vidit, et amplexus, atque oscula, sentiitque mentem
Puer sororum conscius Dearum.

Non. Maii, 1830.

DOMUS CONSERVATORIA.

Haud Nos, ut urbem, Flora, per inclytam
Olim Quirites, te colimus Deam,
Fictumve, cælatumve, numen
Marmoreis domibus locamus;

Quas impudicis vocibus ebria
Lascivientûm turba jocantium,
Festis salutatura donis,
Saltibus et strepitu revisat.

Sed rure aprico te vitrea excipit
Ædes, remissis pervia solibus,
Quâ videas imbres nivales,
Et gelidis hyemem sub Arctis.

Secura jam non hospitio minus
Nostro foveris, sub Jove candidum
Quam si benigno tu Tarentum, aut
Niliacam coleres Syenem.

Cæcis pererrat tramitibus domum
Ardor, propinquis missus ab ignibus;
Aut per canales unda clausos
Et fluit, et refluit, recentes

Secum calores perpetuo rotans
Gyro, quietis læta laboribus
Servire, jucundoque curas
Auxilio tenues levare.

Ergo sub auris plurima non suis
Ardentis Austri progenies viget,
Neve occidentales Eois
Addere se socias recusant

Herbæve, floresve; aut patrium dolent
Liquisse cœlum, fervidus abstulit
Si nauta, mercatorve prudens,
Vel peregrina petens viator

Misit colendas; gentibus exteris
Spectandus hospes, salvus ab æstubus
Uliginosis, nubibusque
Letiferâ gravidis arenâ.

Non tale monstrum, naribus igneos
Spirans vapores, cessit Iäsoni,
Nec tale donum sævientis
Conjugis innocuam Creontis

Natam perussit: nec vagus Hercules
Tam dira vicit, perdomuit licet
Hydrasque, Centaurosque, clavo, et
Semiferum validus Giganta.

Sit fabulosis fas mihi cantibus
Lenire curas! sit mihi floribus
Mulcere me fessum, senemque
Carpere quos juvenis solebam.

Cal. Feb. 1828.

END OF VOL. I.

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